

Tuesday February 24 1998

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The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL
NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

At 75, what's the future for Hume rule?

Carry on Cardinal

G2 with European weather

Lord's: all boys together - and that's the way it'll stay

John Duncan
Sports Correspondent

THE MCC, temple of the cricketing establishment, has voted against ending 211 years of history and has rejected a proposal to admit women to membership, according to senior Lord's sources.

Though the vote is said to have been "an incredibly close call", the necessary two-thirds majority to

accept women has not been achieved. The MCC will hold an extraordinary general meeting at Lord's tonight to hear the results of a postal vote from its 17,500 members. But insiders said that the cause had been lost by the narrowest of margins.

Such a result would be a blow to the England and Wales Cricket Board, the governing body of cricket, which has invested heavily in promoting the game

among women. "The MCC is a private members' club and does not run cricket," said Tim Lamb, the ECB's chief executive. "In the grand scheme of things, the vote doesn't really matter. If the vote has gone the wrong way, it will not deflect from our determination to encourage women's cricket at all levels."

The MCC ceased to be the governing body of the sport 30 years ago.

Melissa Benn on men and the home

Who cleans the toilet in your house?

G2 pages 4/5

Education

Teaching graduates to sell themselves

G2 pages 12/13



Ties that bind... Members of the MCC are said to have voted by a narrow margin against a move to grant membership to women

PHOTOGRAPH: ADRIAN MURRELL

Bombing brings loyalist warning

John Mullin
Ireland Correspondent

THE hardline Loyalist Volunteer Force last night vowed to mount a fearsome revenge attack on Catholics after terrorists exploded a massive car bomb in its heartland, Portadown in Co Armagh.

Mainstream loyalists warned that their four-year-old ceasefire was stretched to breaking point after the second car bomb attack on a Protestant town in mid-Ulster in 72 hours. They suspect IRA involvement after Sinn Fein's suspension on Friday from the multi-party talks.

Billy Hutchinson of the Progressive Unionist Party, linked to the Ulster Volunteer Force which is on ceasefire, said: "I am asking loyalists to remain calm, but sooner or later my influence is going to evaporate. Political dialogue is not working. Time is running out for the loyalist ceasefire."

Hopes of a political settlement were also crumbling towards a new low as David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists, also linked the attack to the IRA. He said: "There can be no question of Sinn Fein re-entering the talks process after this."

Tony Blair's decision on whether to meet Sinn Fein before its scheduled return on March 9 is assuming greater significance. Sinn Fein is threatening to stay away from the talks if he fails to see its leaders.

Unionists will be infuriated if he does, and a walk-out — long resisted by Mr Trimble — is on the cards if Sinn Fein gets its meeting or is allowed back. He is due to meet Mr Blair this week.

Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein president, denied IRA involvement in the Portadown bombing, saying: "I think that the IRA would, if it was ending its cessation, say so."

He confirmed that he was to meet Bertie Ahern, the Irish prime minister, today. "Sinn



Firemen at work amid rubble in the centre of Portadown after yesterday's car bomb explosion

PHOTOGRAPH: CRISPIN ROWELL

Fein has no more control over this current situation than any other political party," he insisted, referring to the Portadown bombing.

Portadown is in Mr Trimble's Upper Bann constituency. Moira in Co Down, the terrorists' target on Friday, is in Jeffrey Donaldson's Lagan Valley constituency. Both men are crucial to the Ulster Unionists' decision to participate in the negotiations at Stormont, and the selecting of targets was seen as provocative.

As with Friday's attack in Moira, there was no claim of responsibility for yesterday's bomb.

Suspicion was falling on the Continuity IRA, the splinter group opposed to ceasefire and behind a series of car bomb attacks, until now infrequent.

Loyalists are blaming the North Armagh brigade of the IRA. They called on the Sinn Fein leadership to prove its credentials and pull back into line the dissident elements.

Bairbre de Brun, Sinn Fein

talks delegate, called on the group behind the bomb attacks in Moira and Portadown to claim responsibility.

Security sources believe IRA members are working with CIRA.

Since the two murders in Belfast which prompted Sinn Fein's exclusion the IRA has been linked to one killing and two car bombs.

The LVF had already attempted early yesterday to explode a car bomb just across the Irish border in Dromad, Co Louth. It left a vehicle out-

side a police station, but the bomb was made safe in a controlled explosion.

Police in Portadown had 20 minutes to evacuate the town centre before the explosion. The device is thought to have contained 500lbs of home-made explosives in a grey BMW parked close to the RUC station for more than three hours before the blast.

The bomb exploded just before midday. The talks were reconvened at Stormont without Sinn Fein. About 20 buildings were devastated.

Clinton puts Iraq on trial over deal

Martin Kettle in Washington, Ian Black in London and Julian Borger in Baghdad

THE United States last night gave its tentative approval to a deal with Iraq struck by the United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, but insisted that the use of force would be automatic if Saddam Hussein again obstructed weapons inspectors.

President Bill Clinton, backed by his ally Tony Blair, said that US acceptance of the agreement was conditional upon the full implementation of UN resolutions.

In a national television address, the president gave a cautious welcome to the deal, which gives inspectors access to "all sites anywhere in the country" and allows repeat visits.

"All Americans should be satisfied," he said but added: "There are issues that still need to be clarified to our satisfaction and details that need to be worked on."

"What really matters is... not what Iraq says, but what it does. If Iraq fails to comply this time... there will be serious consequences."

Mr Annan is to present the deal to the full UN Security Council today.

Britain and the US prepared for a flurry of diplomacy to ensure that next time there is a crisis there will be no repeat of public divisions over air strikes.

Both said they were keeping their forces in the Gulf for the time being.

Mr Annan believes he obtained unfettered access to suspected weapons sites by offering Iraq a vaguely-worded promise of "light at the end of the tunnel" — accelerated inspections leading to the eventual lifting of sanctions, but without deadlines.

Yet even before he left Baghdad doubts about the durability of the accord were growing. The state-run Iraqi News Agency trumpeted an Iraqi victory and claimed that the presidential sites at the heart of the crisis could only be inspected under "specific criteria".

But speaking in Paris, on his way back to the UN in New York, Mr Annan said: "President Saddam and the Iraqi government accept that we can

visit all eight palaces. Tomorrow."

Mr Annan said there were "no time limits or deadlines" in the agreement, but added: "I think it is important that we do our work in a reasonable period."

UN officials were upbeat, saying they knew of nothing in the accord signed by Mr Annan and the Iraqi deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, that the US could find fault with. "They would have to be really nipping," one diplomat said.

Mr Clinton consulted Mr Blair and the French president, Jacques Chirac, with the two agreeing to implement the

accord as soon as possible. He was also planning to speak to Russia's president, Boris Yeltsin.

Mr Blair said: "It is absolutely essential that we are not back in this position in a few weeks or a few months time."

And he confirmed that Britain would be seeking a tough, new Security Council resolution giving the UN the right to respond "by whatever means necessary" if the Iraqi dictator turn to page 2, column 6

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Sketch

Ho, ho, ho! Don't mention the war



Simon Hoggart

THE Commons was buzzing with the news that the war had been postponed. So naturally they talked about something else. Frankly, if it was a current affairs programme on TV this lot would never get a second series. "Hi, I'm Betty Boothroyd, and welcome to In Your Face, the show where anything can happen — and probably will! Right now the world is echoing to the sensational news that Saddam Hussein has backed down. Or has he? So expect sparks to fly when we have a studio discussion on disability allowances, or the Scotland Bill (exempted business) provisions, and tonight's big question: Will Doritos ever replace the traditional pork scratching in Britain's pubs?" (I made the last one up, but the others were all too real.)

Mr Prescott arrived to talk about Planning For The Communities Of The Future, or Sucking Up To Our Rustic Cousins, as his statement might have been called. He said repeatedly that the Government wanted local communities to take the key decisions, which he called a "truly bottom-up approach" to the problem. This was also the approach taken by Mr Danbert Nobacon with the bucket of food water.

However, Mr Prescott had dried off and seemed quite relaxed. He began by saying that, to his mind, "much of the debate so far has been clouded by unhelpful language, crude figures, and confused statistics".

Tories collapsed in a giggling heap. To their mind, no figure could be more crude than Mr Prescott's, and no language more unhelpful or confused.

He plunged on. "For example, the term 'brownfield' is not helpful. (They giggled some more.) I propose to talk about 'recycled land'."

Tories were enjoying every moment. Not only did this smell like a Government U-turn, but Mr Prescott, of all people, was lecturing them on the nuances of language. The problem was worse than we thought. We needed 175,000 new dwellings every year, because people are living longer and separating more often. He depicted a nation of Victor Meldrews, advancing into endless old age while getting more cantankerous by the day.

Soon, he seemed to imply, we'd have each other so much that we'll need a separate house for every man, woman and child in the land.

This alarming prospect seemed closer when he described the new Millennium Village, to be built on recycled land in Greenwich, near the Dome. These would be houses with "energy use 50 per cent better than average! Every home will be linked to the Internet, opening new horizons of communication!" It was a bleak picture. One envisaged the empty streets, the parents huddled round the energy efficient radiators, while the children searched for computer ports, all watched over by a 300ft statue of Peter Mandelson.

Tories leered again. But then their own change of policy may also be linked with the new rural militancy. After all, most of them regard the best use for the countryside as making rich businessmen even richer.

Mr Prescott denied he had made a U-turn. They laughed back at him. "It's no good just saying 'Ho, ho, ho!'" he said. "Ho, ho, ho!" they mocked. The House began to sound like Santa's Grotto in Hanoi.

Mr Prescott raced on. Words tumbled after each other like excited puppies, sometimes in the right place, as often in the wrong one. He would say "money" when he meant "land", "land" when he meant "money". Clauses slid together like a motorway pile-up in fog. Yet somehow we understood it all.

I think Mr Prescott's brain is like a broken karaoke machine. He tries to read the word that is flashing in his head, but it's the wrong one; the laser disc is skipping and he finishes each performance 30 seconds before the backing group catches up.

Review

Guilt trip on to well trodden turf

Eddie Gibb

The Chic Nords

Traverse, Edinburgh

THE CHIC Nords are a pop band teetering on the edge of the big time. Put one foot wrong and they will plunge into the abyss of failure along with the wannabes and never-will-bes. A few hit singles and some enthusiastic press coverage suggest they could go all the way to the top.

The three band members, all skinny nylon shirts and exposed midriffs, are not so sure. They face that eternal music industry guilt trip: does commercial success mean you have sold out? In an attempt to resolve their insecurities, the band retreat to a chilly Highland mansion to regroup and write new songs.

The manager has a slightly different agenda, however. Ed (John Kazek) fancies himself as a bit of Malcolm McLaren-style media manipulator, a Svengali figure. It turns out that he plans to scam the music press into believing the band has vanished.

This is a knowing nod to the unexplained disappearance of the Manic Street Preachers' songwriter, Richey Edwards, which attracted thousands of teens to the band. Richey famously carved "4 Real" on his arm for the benefit of a sceptical journalist, and the Chic Nords are similarly wondering how you establish your authenticity in the music industry's hall of mirrors.

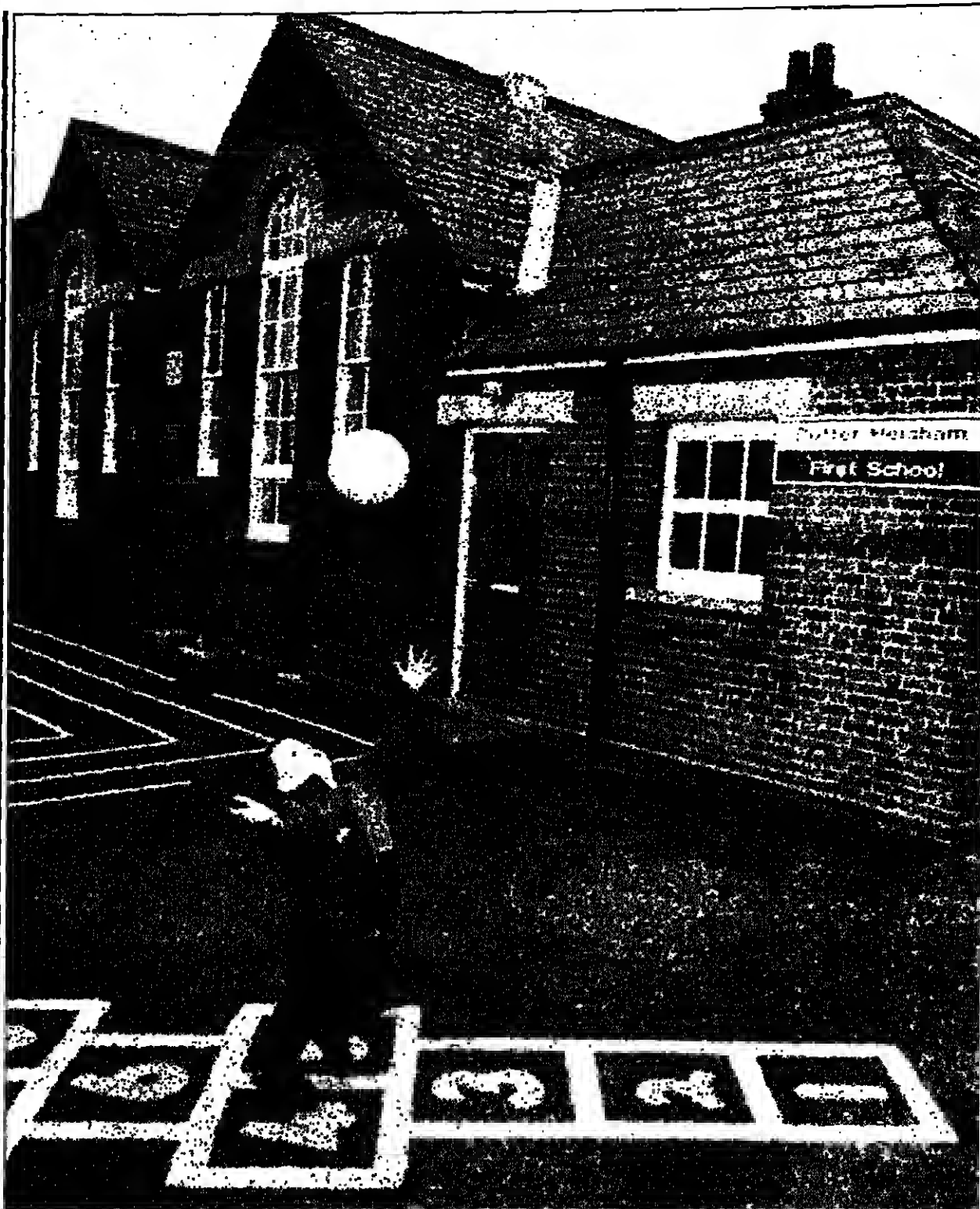
Like Richey, frontman Riki (Joshua Henderson) has a history of mental illness. The rest of the band think he needs the medical help, but Ed figures

that Riki's drug-induced instability could be an asset to the band, and adds dispensing pharmaceuticals to his list of managerial duties. "Junkies are flavour of the month," he says. This is as true of pop music as it is of other forms of youth culture — stage plays, for instance. The Chic Nords is a "chemical generation" piece from Edinburgh-based writer Roman O'Donnell, which is inevitably performed in the dark shadow of Irvine Welsh.

The fact that this debut play has been given a three-week run on the main stage suggests the Traverse was hoping for a bit of the Trainspotting effect to rub off on the production.

Much of the language and humour is reminiscent of Welsh, though you could charitably argue that it simply springs from the same urban source. O'Donnell seems aware of the danger in straying on to this familiar turf, and gives the characters lines which sound like ironic comments on the play itself. When Ed tells Riki that the hardest thing to sell is "incomprehensible shite", the words bounce self-consciously round the room.

The Chic Nords is not incomprehensible shite, but it does display obscurantist tendencies. The nicely turned jokes and tart writing of the first half become mired in long tracts of verbal showing off. This is a polished production featuring four impressive performances, and O'Donnell has interesting things to say about art and media hype. But we got the extended 12-inch remix when a three-minute single would have made the point more effectively.



Richard Martin in the playground yesterday at Potter Heigham school, where he is the only pupil. PHOTOGRAPH: FRIDAY MEMBER

Top of the class — the pupil with a school of his own

Vivak Chaudhary

Education Correspondent

IT WAS a successful first day at school yesterday for five-year-old Richard Martin as he returned from his half-term break. Two hours of maths and English in the morning was followed by art and story reading in the afternoon. You could say that he finished top of the class in everything.

In what might be described as an extreme example of government commitment to cut class sizes, Richard returned to the Potter Heigham first school in Norfolk as probably the first pupil in Britain to have a school exclusively to himself.

The bizarre situation of the school with one pupil and two teachers arose after all the parents withdrew their children from the school, in the village of Potter Heigham, 15 miles from Norwich.

The school, which had 22 pupils, failed its Ofsted inspection in July 1996 and a reinspection last October.

Angela Martin, Richard's mother, said: "We put Richard into a new school but he was bullied there, so we wanted him back at Potter Heigham."

"He loved his first day back. We'd like to keep him at Potter Heigham for as long as possible."

Sitting in his office amid an eerie silence, acting head teacher Stephen Bloore confesses that his first day at Potter Heigham has been the most trouble-free of his 22 years in teaching.

Mr Bloore — one of the two members of staff, along with Richard's teacher, Julie Hornal — said: "Doing playground duty with only one pupil to watch over was a strange experience."

Norfolk county council, which is responsible for the school, said that it was able to allow Richard to return to Potter Heigham because, although all the pupils had been withdrawn before Christmas, the school was never formally closed.

Desks, chairs, books and teaching materials remained intact. A spokeswoman said: "It is our statutory duty to provide an education for all our children. Richard lives within the catchment area and has every right to go to the school."

After a productive morning, Richard was collected by his mother and went home for lunch. Mr Bloore, who described Richard as an articulate, intelligent boy, insisted that a school meal would have been provided for Richard if he had wanted it.

Mr Bloore says that his main concern is the lack of social contact Richard will have with his peers while at school. "And in a class of one, it's difficult for the teacher to stand back to give time and space to the child."

The council said that the decision on whether the school should remain open will be made at the end of this term.

It could not put a precise figure on how much it was costing to keep the school open. The spokeswoman said: "The cost of running the school is already included in this year's budget. But it is disproportionately expensive to have one supply teacher for one pupil."

Residents of Potters Heigham, where Richard lives, would be consulted over the future of the school. One thing for sure is that playtime will never be the same again for Richard. Mr Bloore said: "I'm just trying to provide Richard with as normal an environment as possible. We played football at playtime and I'm happy to say that I won."

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Irvine seeks to turn the tide

Michael White

Political Editor

THE Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, was yesterday stung into making his first official statement in defence of the £50,000 refurbishment of his official residence only to have the Opposition reject his explanation as "wholly inadequate".

As ministerial "Friends of Derry" Irvine started rallying belated support for the embattled Lord Chancellor, ministers and officials also moved to calm fears in Whitehall that the £2.5 million plan to expand Lord Irvine's department to support his special responsibilities is a step toward creating a Department of Justice.

Lord Irvine believes he is now the target of a media-driven vendetta to undermine one of Tony Blair's most valued confidants. But the most persistent damage to the reputation of the Prime Minister's legal mentor has arisen from attacks on the programme to restore the Lord Chancellor's apartments in the Palace of Westminster to their mid-Victorian glory.

Last night these stung Lord Irvine into issuing his first official statement on the issue: a detailed justification of decisions "taken by the relevant House (of Lords) authorities and not by the Lord Chancellor," he emphasised.

The statement stressed that paintings, sculpture, prints and other art objects being borrowed from galleries in England and Scotland are being taken from the gallery cellars and will soon be on view, thanks to the "substantial public access" being planned.

It also denied that ministers had ever claimed that the refurbishment of the apartments had been decided before Labour returned to power.

Though some peers and MPs have complained of extravagance, the committee which authorised them has a Labour chairman, Lord Boston, but no Labour majority.

Last night, the Government Chief Whip, Nick Brown, waded into the row. Insisting that his statement had come without prompting from the Prime Minister, he lambasted the attacks on the Lord Chancellor as "out of all proportion".

Mr Brown said: "The Lord Chancellor's mastery of complex detail, his intellectual abilities, and sheer decency are central to the success of this Government."

But last night the Tory legal spokesman, Edward Garnier QC, called Lord Irvine's explanation "wholly inadequate" and claimed most Labour MPs were "seething".

Lord Irvine was also the object of an unrelated leak in yesterday's Guardian about the £2.5 million expansion of his department. This would see Lord Irvine's staff increased by 30 to 40, but would be financed within its existing budget, officials stressed.

As Mr Garnier tabled Commons questions to flush out further details about future use of the refurbished rooms, Lord Irvine's statement declared: "The Palace of Westminster is an important part of our national heritage. It deserves to be maintained in a historically authentic manner."

"The quality of the refurbishment of the Lord Chancellor's Residence is determined by the decisions of House Committees and is to no higher a standard than would apply to any other part of the Palace of Westminster of comparable importance."

Clinton puts Iraq on trial over weapons inspection accord

continued from page 1

broke his word. "I think what is very, very important is that we have this new resolution that makes it absolutely clear we are not going out into some long drawn-out diplomatic game again," he said.

Reaction among ordinary Iraqis was muted, with many saying they would reserve judgement for the day sanctions imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait are ended.

The crisis was ignited by Iraq's refusal to allow UN inspectors into the presidential palaces, but Mr Aziz fiercely denied that the 11th-hour deal amounted to a climbdown. And he rejected suggestions that the US and British threat of force had played a role.

"It was diplomacy. Wise, balanced, United Nations world diplomacy that enabled us to reach this agreement. Not sabre-rattling," he said.

Patten and Murdoch split in anti-China row

Michael White

Political Editor

CHRIS Patten is poised to change publisher for his new book on the hand-over of Hong Kong after a blazing row with Murdoch-owned HarperCollins over attempts to tone down the manuscript's criticisms of Beijing — and a subsequent bid to rubbish it as "boring".

Authoritative rumours of the battle over the former Governor of Hong Kong's predictably harsh verdict on the Communist regime which snubbed him as a "perfidious whore" and "drooling idiot" for his pro-democracy stance in the former British colony.

Rupert Murdoch is said to have urged senior editors to have the anti-Beijing passages toned down or have the book rubbish. "Unfortunately the people involved had already praised its quality — and done so in writing," one source said last night. A fresh deal negotiated by agents and lawyers is thought to be imminent.

Mr Patten, the Conservative Party chairman who decisively helped John Major win the 1992 election but lost his own seat, left Hong Kong after the July 1 handover and went to his home in south-west France to write East



At odds over China: Chris Patten, left, and Rupert Murdoch

And West, reportedly for £150,000. Other HarperCollins authors are puzzled by the row. Rival versions, one alleging censorship, the other saying the text was boring, appeared in weekend newspapers. The man at the centre of the row, Stuart Proffitt, HarperCollins's editor-in-chief, has gone to ground.

Mr Murdoch has a long track record of adjusting the political stance of his media outlets to meet political and commercial imperatives of the country he is operating in — including Britain where his papers are unexpectedly supportive of New Labour.

Although he once claimed that his satellite TV enterprises had helped undermine the Soviet bloc the Australian-born media magnate later admitted removing BBC World from his Star satellite system — broadcast from Hong Kong into mainland China — in 1994. It had been causing him problems in Beijing.

The pro-Murdoch version of the row, which appeared in the Mail On Sunday, suggested that Lady Thatcher will relish Mr Patten's discomfort. But when he fell out with the "old China hands" over Hong Kong she was on his side.

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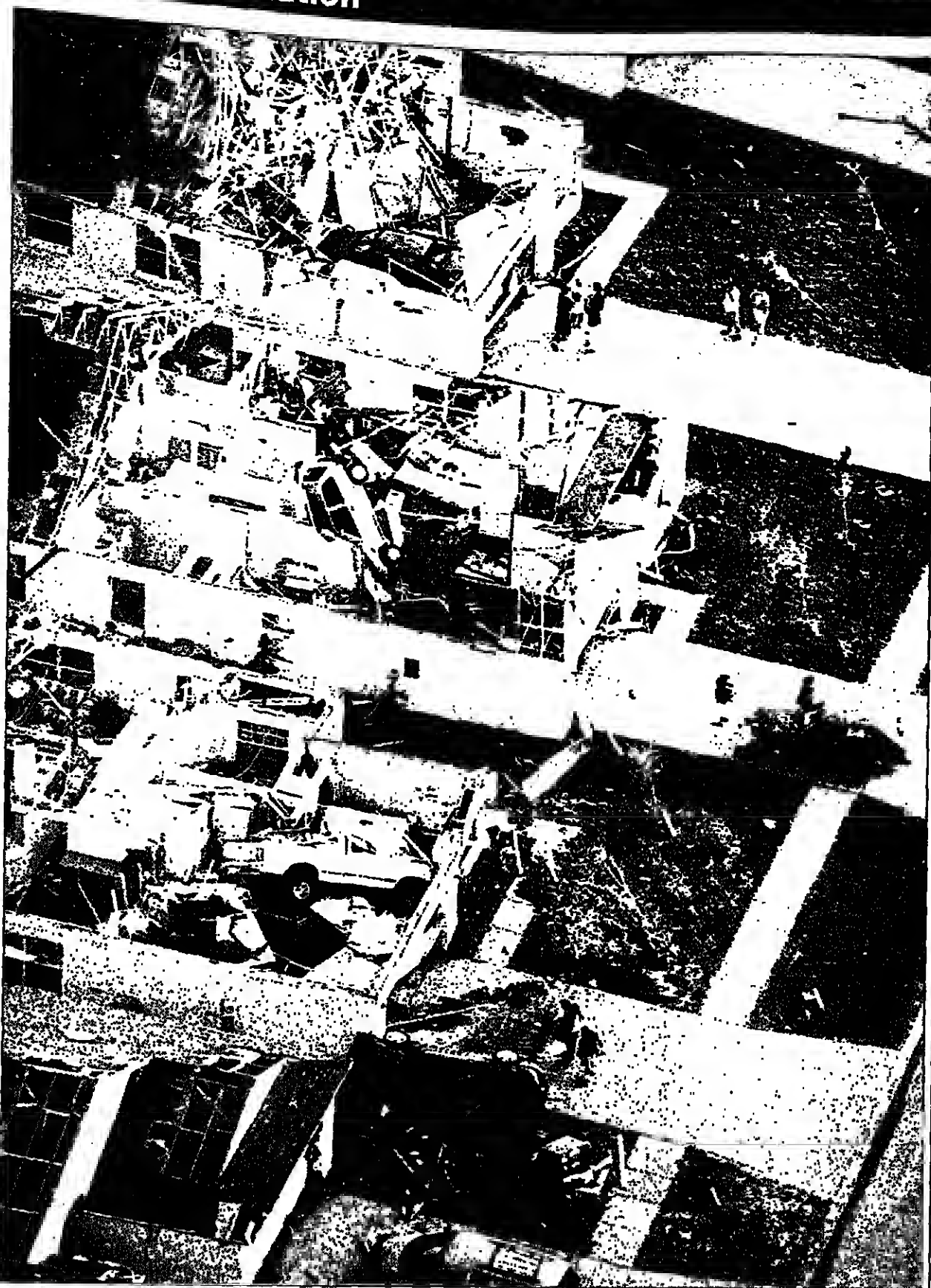
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Wake of devastation



Residents return to what remains of their homes near Kissimmee, south of Orlando

PHOTOGRAPH: JOE SKOPPER

33 dead after storms batter Florida

Martin Kettle in Washington

AT LEAST 33 people were killed yesterday as 200mph tornadoes carved an 11-mile swath of death and destruction across the Orlando region in central Florida, uprooting hundreds of homes and vehicles.

The 12 tornadoes, which struck in the early hours, were attributed to the El Niño weather phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean. The twisters carved a route around the city of Orlando, which is visited by millions of tourists each year.

"It is the greatest loss of life from a tornado event in Florida history," said Jim Lushine, a Miami meteorologist.

"We've had so many touch-downs we can't keep track of them," said a spokeswoman for the Seminole County sheriff's office. "Some people slept right through it. They woke up and their house was gone."

Fields were littered with the remains of roofs ripped from homes. Mobile homes, of which there are thousands in the area, bore the brunt. Near one house a pickup truck was tossed into the branches of a tree.

President Clinton said the "thoughts and prayers" of Americans were with the people of the region.

Britain's vice-consul in Orlando, Hugh Hunter, visited the scene. The area is popular with British visitors and there is also a resident British population. But many half-term holidaymakers had already left for home before the storms struck.

"We have no notification of any British casualties," Mr Hunter said.

The tornadoes missed the area's major tourist attractions, including the Walt Disney World and Universal Studios theme parks.



A firefighter surveys the destruction at a Kissimmee campsite where seven people died. One woman survived unhurt when her home, below, overturned

PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL GREEN



Bank coins record £5bn profit

Lemming myth disproved

HSBC Balance sheet

Total assets £286.4 billion
Profits, 1997 £4,971 million
Total staff 132,285
Operating profit per employee £39,090

Global assets



Hong Kong

Lisa Buckingham City Editor

HSBBC, which owns Midland and First Direct, has underlined its position as the world's most profitable bank by coughing up a surplus of nearly £5 billion last year.

The record results mean HSBBC is one of only five UK corporations with profits above the £3 billion-a-year mark. Only Shell can claim to turn in a higher annual surplus.

At its current level of profitability the huge banking group would be able to buy sizeable companies, such as the supermarkets group Safeway or Railtrack, with just one year's earnings. And if the bank's top bosses were to shed their usual caution and negotiate a small overdraft they would probably be able to mop up both British Steel and the fashion group Next.

Even Lloyds TSB, probably

the most admired of the big UK banking groups, cannot rival HSBBC's earning power which puts it comfortably above other legendary money machines such as BP, British Telecom and drugs giant Glaxo Wellcome.

But the performance of HSBBC — whose surplus outstripped the Kenyan economy — was met with accusations from unions that it is attempting to keep shareholders happy by freezing staff pay.

Investors are to be given a dividend of 50p per share, a rise of more than a fifth on the year before. But the Banking Insurance and Finance Union — which had a run-in with Midland during failed attempts to organise a day of action last Christmas Eve — said about 20,000 staff would receive no pay rise even though the bank earns £40,000 for every one of its staff.

A spokesman for Midland Bank — which contributed more than £1 billion of the group's profits — dismissed the union's assertion as a negotiating ploy, claiming

that 98.6 per cent of its 40,000 UK employees would be given a 9 per cent cash bonus compared with 7 per cent the year before.

He added that the number of staff denied an increase because they were at the top of their grade was not yet known. The 1997 results made it clear that costs — a very large proportion of which are made up of salaries — have been pegged in an effort to maintain the revival of the fortunes of Midland, which was an unprofitable mess just six years ago when it was bought by HSBBC.

HSBC's famously tight housekeeping was not sufficient to stop some of the top traders in its investment bank pocketing huge bonuses, which helped to scythe £36 million off the profits of that part of the business — which also suffered from the Asian economic fall-out. The operation also lost £30 million after bad deals in the Far East.

HSBC shrugs off malaise; Notebook, page 12

John Ecard

IT'S OFFICIAL: lemmings do not commit mass suicide by flinging themselves off cliffs.

This age-old belief — and metaphor for the dire effects of human overcrowding — has finally been quashed by a BBC Wildlife on One team, which has taken the most sustained look at a colony of the species yet conducted.

"The myth of countless hamster-like creatures hurling themselves to destruction has been exploded," the programme's producer, Michelle Thompson, said yesterday. The team spent six months filming the field-mouse-sized rodents on Victoria Island in the west Canadian Arctic. It found that, far from getting morose or migration-prone, lemmings flourish with overcrowding, provided that their food supplies last.

Although an exceptional-



The lemming cliff jumping is not in its line at all

ly warm summer caused their highest population peak for 30 years, the creatures grew fat, bred copiously, and stayed put. So did their grateful predators, foxes and snowy owls, which produced twice as many offspring as usual. The cliff-top myth gathered force from accounts by 19th century naturalists, who wrote of lemmings "pouring down in myriads

from the mountains" and plunging into the sea.

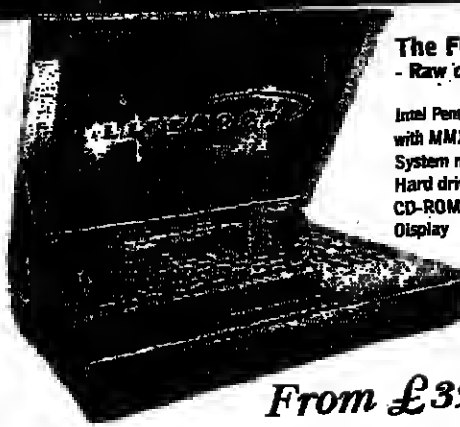
"These naturalists were repeating Scandinavian and Inuit folklore as if they had seen these things," Ms Thompson said. "The idea gained currency, like Chinese whispers."

By the mid-20th century most scientists were confident that any falls were accidents among lemmings migrating down Norwegian mountains to lush pastures. Where possible, they found, the species avoids water.

But the myth was revived by a 1950s Walt Disney "True Life" film. According to naturalists, the company shipped hundreds of Canadian lemmings to the US and herded them off a cliff for the cameras.

The new eight-part Wildlife series with David Attenborough starts on March 10. The Canadian episode on April 14 defers to folklore by opening with a lemming charging down a cliff — and skidding to a halt on the brink.

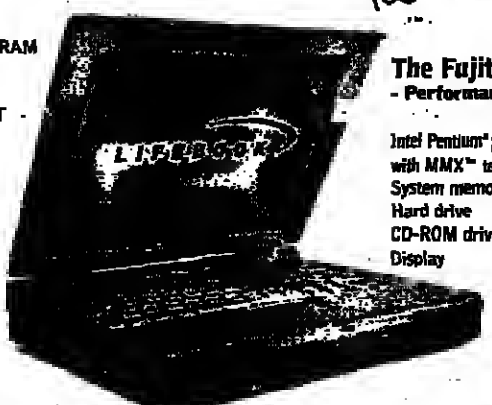
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4 BRITAIN

12-year-old victim tied, gagged and videoed by man he trusted

Scoutmaster jailed for reign of child abuse

Sarah Hall

A SCOUTMASTER who videoed a 12-year-old boy being tied, gagged and having electrodes attached to his body during a seven-year reign of abuse was yesterday jailed for 30 months.

Group scoutmaster Robert Kearns, aged 49, from west London admitted one charge of conspiring to take indecent photos of children under 16, one of possessing the pictures with a view to distributing them and four counts of indecent assault involving two boys. Kearns, a member of the UK Baden-Powell Scouts, will be freed in 10 months having already spent just over five months in custody.

His assistant, scoutmaster Keith Spratt, aged 49, from Bracknell, Berkshire — who admitted conspiring to take

the photos — will be freed in weeks after half his 12-month sentence was suspended.

Sentencing Kearns at Southwark crown court, Judge George Bathurst-Norman said: "Anyone who saw that video could not help be disgusted by watching the way that boy was systematically corrupted."

Earlier, the court was shown the tape in which the sobbing scout was tied and gagged by Kearns, before being subjected to physical examinations and having electrodes attached to his body.

The judge said Kearns had committed a very serious breach of trust after winning over the boy and his mother. He had taken the mother out to dinner and "invigiled himself into [her] good books" and had taken the boy on nu-

merous expeditions. It was clear from the video the boy had gone along with the pornographic acts as a way of expressing his thanks, the judge added.

Sentencing Spratt, also a member of the UK Baden-Powell Scouts, Judge Bathurst-Norman said he had taken into account his good character and the fact the photos he had taken, while suggestive, did not feature children without clothes on.

For Kearns, James Sturman said: "This defendant was abused as a child and the circle has come all the way round, as it so often does in these cases, and he finds himself in the dock." He asked the judge to bear in mind that the video and photographs were only distributed to a small number of people.

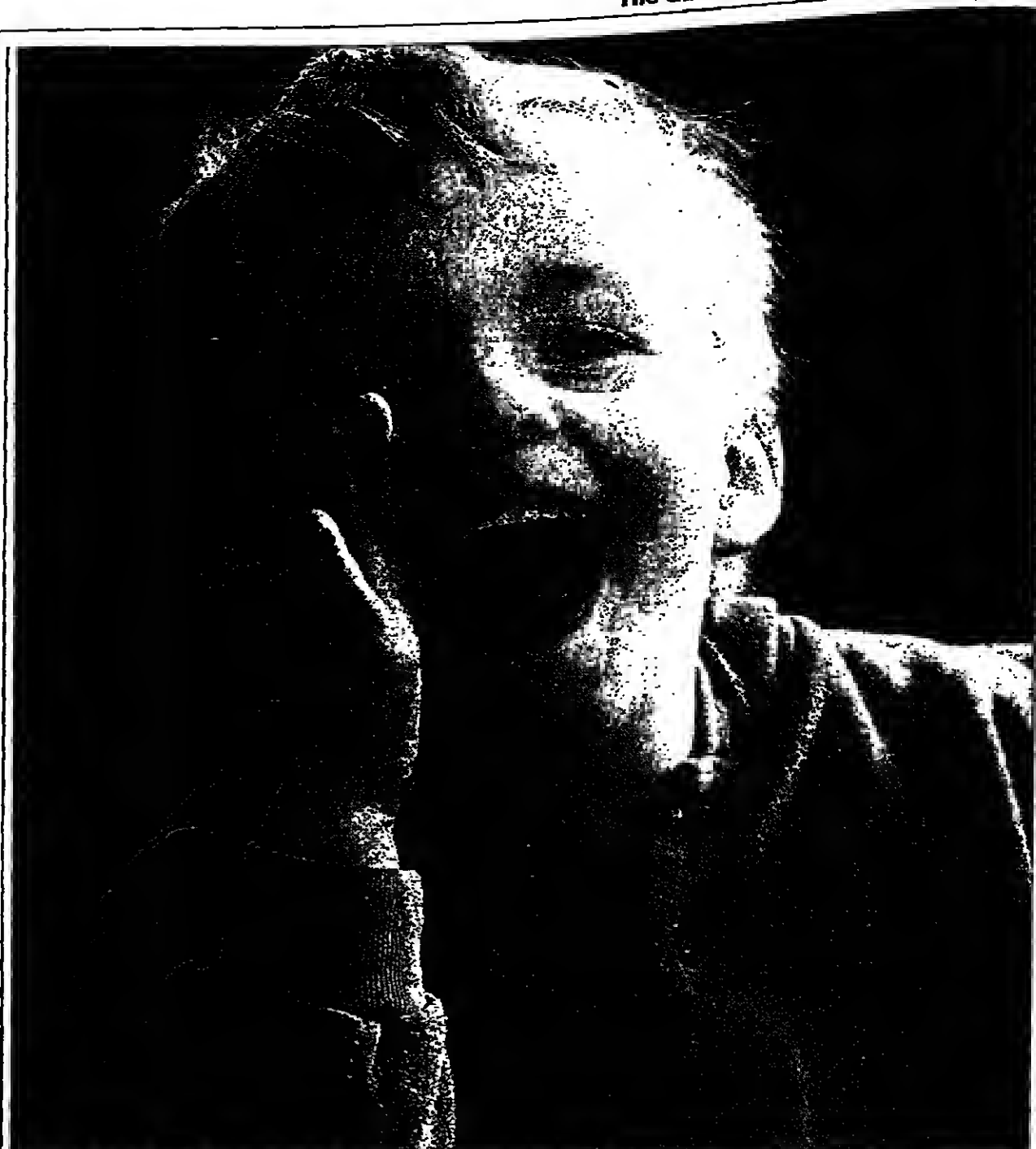
Earlier, the court heard, the pair frequently took scouts on

trips abroad. They were finally caught after accidentally leaving one of the incriminating videos they had shot in France with a friend.

Scotland Yard said several premises including the London meeting place where Kearns was group scoutmaster and Spratt assistant scoutmaster were searched after the men were arrested in September 1987. When police raided Kearns's home, 350 similar videos and 14,000 negatives were found.

The case is part of an ongoing investigation concerning the appearance of 50 children used in pornographic films and photographs.

Tony Wheddon, southern commissioner of the UK Baden-Powell Scouts' Association, said: "I believe the sentences were far too lenient. I am greatly distressed by this ..."



Raised voice ... Tom Coward, described by a doctor as a competitive child who wanted to make himself heard

Lawyers seek rail crash 'secrets'

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

VITAL documents about the Southall train crash in which seven people died are being withheld, lawyers representing the victims claimed on the eve of the public inquiry.

The inquiry will be opened and adjourned today because prosecutions could follow. But the solicitors say that the rail companies should not use

the possible prosecutions as an excuse to withhold documents.

Solicitor Mark Harvey said: "Without full knowledge of the circumstances that led to the collision, we will not know who best to call to give evidence."

Railtrack, the company responsible for track, signalling and stations, said it had co-operated fully with the police and the Health and Safety Commission. The HSC said that usually 00 documents

would be issued until a decision had been taken on prosecutions.

The accident happened when a Swansea to London express collided with an empty freight train last September. An automatic protection system had been fitted to the train, but was not working.

Another group of lawyers representing families said it would warn that safety issues would not be immediately addressed because of possible

criminal proceedings against either the driver or one or more of the companies involved.

Chris Mather, one of the committee of solicitors representing victims, said: "If the reasons for the crash are not investigated, there is a very real risk of a repeat of this horrifying accident."

The driver of the passenger train involved in the crash was arrested and bailed until April 17. He has not been charged with any offence.

Three-year-old finds way to break the sound barrier

Tom's full volume vocal chords puzzle doctors and dismay family

Geoffrey Tibbs

TO LOOK at the face of Tom Coward you could be forgiven for thinking that butter would not melt in his mouth. Anyone in hearing range of the three-year-old would beg to differ.

Not for him the excited chatter of other toddlers of his age. Tom seems only able to shout and sing at the top of his gruff voice, driving his family and neighbours to despair.

The complaint has caused him to develop nodules on his vocal chords, a condition usually associated with opera singers, football managers or other adults who constantly use their voices at full volume.

Now, the deafening story of Tom's vocal chords and

efforts to treat them are to form one of the main subjects of an eight-part fly-on-the-wall BBC1 series, Doctor's Orders, starting tonight, which follows the Inham Lodge practice at Minehead, Somerset.

"It's something I have not come across before," said Paul Slade.

Tests showed there was no problem with his hearing. An exploratory operation at a Taunton hospital revealed Tom's hoarse voice was caused by the nodules in his throat but the discovery provided no explanation for the constant shouting that had caused them to develop.

Dr Slade said his impression was that Tom — the youngest of four in the family — was a competitive child who wanted to make himself heard and that the

shouting had become a vicious spiral. The family is now working with a speech and language therapist to learn the rewards of quiet talking and help Tom use his voice more gently.

His mother Cherry Coward said Tom would start shouting from the moment he woke up and had driven the family to distraction.

"Whenever we used to take him out and he saw someone he knew he would start singing Happy Birthday to them at the top of his voice. I used to just shrink away in embarrassment."

The hope is that as the boy's vocal chords grow the nodules may decrease on their own accord without the need for an operation.

"We have put a system of rewards and treats in place to encourage him to be quieter," says Tom's mother. "If he does respond we say we will take him to his grandma's. She loves seeing him because her hearing isn't that good."



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Straw faces union strife from prison officers

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

PRISON officers last night became the first group to vote to defy a Conservative anti-union law over the Labour government's refusal to restore their right to take industrial action.

The Prison Officers' Association voted to take national industrial action if the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, tries to use the courts to declare illegal any action by the union at any one prison.

Mark Healy, the POA's national chairman, predicted that a confrontation was likely "within weeks" at any prison in Britain, including those in Northern Ireland. "If they use this Tory anti-union law against one of our branches they will have a national dispute on their hands," he warned.

private prisons came back into public ownership.

The prison officers have been angered by Mr Straw's announcement that Labour's promises to restore their trade union rights extended to an offer of a pay review body in return for not having the right to strike accompanied by binding arbitration to settle other disputes. While the POA argues they should be treated on a par with teachers and nurses, the Home Secretary compares their status to police officers or members of the forces.

Mr Healy said yesterday the vast majority of disputes in the 140 prisons in England and Wales were not to do with pay or holidays but with health and safety issues, particularly assaults by inmates.

The POA chairman said he expected Mr Straw to react by threatening court action including sequestration and

'If they use this Tory law against us they will face a national dispute'

very large fines. He claimed that he had letters from Labour MPs and peers apologising for the Home Secretary's action.

Staff at the Morning Star will go on strike tomorrow, halting publication of the newspaper which started life as the Daily Worker in 1930 complete with a hammer and sickle on the front page, writes Kamal Ahmed.

Although the management committee at the newspaper said they would search for a solution "until the 11th hour", it seemed unlikely that a deal could be brokered with the 12 journalists who voted for strike action last week.

"The future of the newspaper is at risk," said Bernie Corbett of the National Union of Journalists, which is backing the strike. "The management have behaved in breach of all the agreements we have with them."

The dispute centres on the rule of the editor, John Haylett, who was suspended after allegations of gross industrial misconduct.

Born of invention... Mr Jefferson makes his debut in Virginia as living proof that cattle, like sheep, can be cloned. He is a test animal for a new kind of pharmaceutical farming

Calf cloned down on the pharm

Tim Radford reports on a leap forward in the hoofsteps of Dolly that may save thousands of lives

MR JEFFERSON is the calf that could make history. The 98lb Holstein was born on February 16 — President's Day in the United States — at a veterinary college in Virginia: cloned from a line of foetal cells preserved in a laboratory.

Mr Jefferson was produced by scientists of PPL Therapeutics, an American subsidiary of the firm based at Roslin in Scotland, home of Dolly the cloned sheep.

They used the techniques pioneered for Dolly and other sheep: they transferred the foetal DNA into an "empty" cow's egg, fused the egg and nucleus with a little burst of electricity, and then popped the now fertilised egg into a surrogate mother.

Mr Jefferson is not a genetically engineered calf, but proof that cows, like sheep, can be cloned.

Successors will carry human genes to make human proteins, and will be cloned to make perfect copies.

It is a test animal for a new kind of pharmaceutical farming, in which genetically-engineered or transgenic animals will be "pharmed" to make high cost, difficult-to-obtain human proteins to save thousands of lives.

A pharmed sheep, Tracy, makes milk rich in a product needed by cystic fibrosis sufferers.

There are genetically engineered cloned lambs called Polly and Molly, unveiled just before Christmas at Roslin, whose milk will provide a blood-clotting factor vital for

one group of haemophiliacs. But sheep are not as useful as they produce only small quantities of milk. Cows produce gallons.

"This is an important step towards using transgenic cattle to produce large quantities of cost-effective therapeutics quickly," said Julian Cooper, chief operating officer at PPL in the US.

Whilst this calf is not transgenic, we have shown we can do the difficult part," Mr Jefferson — named after the third US president, Thomas Jefferson, who was a citizen of Virginia, is not the first cloned calf.

A US firm called Advanced Cell Technology last month cloned two identical, genetically-engineered experimental calves called Charlie and George.

But the Roslin scientists claim leadership with a wide range of animals — including rabbits and pigs and well as sheep and cows — being prepared for "pharming" in Britain and the US.

Other researchers have

begun to claim that Dolly — though not the other animals — was not all she should be. Dolly was cloned from mammary gland cells preserved in the laboratory culture. But Dolly was pregnant at the time the sample was taken.

In a recent scientific journal, scientists have argued that foetal cells have been found to circulate in mammary tissue.

Perhaps Dolly was grown from a foetal cell, rather than from an adult cell which had been persuaded to turn back its own biological clock, one scientist claimed.

Ian Wilmut, the scientist behind Dolly, said recently that there would be only a one in 100 million chance of cloning from a foetal cell rather than an adult one, but there were plans to put the original experiment to the test again.

Ron James, director of PPL in Scotland, said: "The latest controversy is about the fact that nobody else has been able to do it [with an adult cell]; nobody yet has repeated the Dolly experiment."

Tracy offers hope to cystic fibrosis victims

TRACY is the world's first pharmaceutical sheep, writes Tim Radford.

She carries a human gene which makes her produce 30 grams of human alpha-1 antitrypsin or AAT in each litre of milk.

"It's quite staggering because it circulates in human blood at 1.3 grams per litre," says Ron James of PPL Therapeutics at Roslin in Scotland.

AAT is a protein vital in keeping lungs working. Quantities of the protein,

purified from milk supplied by Tracy and her offspring, are being tested in human patients and could be available widely by 2001.

There are more than 65,000 cystic fibrosis sufferers who need AAT. Bayer produce AAT from human blood for use among hereditary emphysema, but only in the US.

Otherwise, the protein is almost unobtainable.

Roslin already has two cloned genetically engineered lambs producing Factor IX, a blood-clotting agent vital for one group of haemophiliacs.

"Pharm" biotechnology companies are now competing for markets which are worth up to \$500 million a year.

Advert for High Court judge set to reform selection secrecy

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

THE first advertisement for the post of High Court judge, which appears in the Times newspaper today does not go as far as asking applicants to be knowledgeable on youth culture.

But the move by the Lord Chancellor to advertise the £112,011-a-year post (£116,045 from April 1), is an attempt to bring the judicial appointments system at least into the 20th century.

The much-criticised current system, depending on "secret soundings" among the leaders of the legal profession and those already sitting as judges, has produced a High Court judiciary little changed in social class, gender and ethnic composition over the last 40 years.

Of 97 High Court judges,



Gazza who? Mr Justice Harman resigned last week

largely public school and Oxbridge educated, only seven are women and none from the ethnic minorities. The Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine called on women and ethnic minority lawyers to "give this opportunity serious thought".

In the past judges have made the headlines for admitting ignorance on major celebrities. Mr Justice Harman, a High Court judge who resigned last week had, in three different cases, said he had not heard of footballer Paul Gascoigne, rock-band Oasis and singer Bruce Springsteen.

The Lord Chancellor will be retaining the secret soundings system, though he protested that the expression was wrong and made the exercise sound sinister. He conceded that it was confidential but he preferred the "secret soundings gathering exercise".

He was also keen to dispel criticism that the confidential system provided scope for personal prejudices to blight careers. He said there was "no place for bigotry in the appointments system" and that the assessments should provide "good, balanced in-

formation about individuals — not hate and prejudice".

Like advertisements for circuit and district judges, which have been running since September 1994, the advert states that those best qualified will be appointed "regardless of ethnic origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, religion or (subject to the physical requirements of the office) disability".

The previous Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, removed the ban on homosexuals serving as judges.

Applications are sought from circuit judges keen for promotion as well as practising lawyers who have had rights to appear in the High Court for 10 years. Applicants need not be QCs.

The Lord Chancellor will still be able to offer posts to lawyers who have not applied.

Police find Ffion's stolen Range Rover — with out-of-date tax disc

WILLIAM Hague knew the empty parking space outside Teesside Airport, Darlington, was bad news, writes Rory Carroll.

Getting home would be tricky, as would calming Ffion over the fact that her recently purchased Range Rover had been stolen.

Not good. Less good was

the lack of ambition of the thief who, rather than selling the car, was content to cruise around for up to three days, possibly through Mr Hague's nearby Richmond constituency, before dumping the car 30 miles away in Redcar, Cleveland.

Police found it and

sought for evidence. On the windscreen they found an out-of-date tax disc.

Central Office yesterday sought to reassure voters: "The tax disc lapse was an oversight which has been rectified today."

Ms Jenkins bought the eight-year-old Range Rover last August. The six-month

disc, costing £79.75, expired on January 31, 1998.

Her husband left it at the airport on February 15. Cleveland police found it on February 17. There was damage to the locks but nothing was taken.

A Tory spokesman said Mr Hague was grateful the damage was slight.

London Fashion Week kicked off at the weekend with more than 40 shows on the official calendar — but without any recognition of a major landmark in the history of fashion and women's health. This year sees the 90th anniversary of the first use of the bra in the UK. Fashion's health hazards

G2 page 10

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Forces stay on alert while deal is tested

Reaction

Martin Walker in Brussels

AMERICAN, British and other international forces will remain on guard around Iraq until the new deal reached by United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, is ratified by a Security Council resolution and the new weapons inspection regime is working satisfactorily, British foreign ministers yesterday.

Global relief at Kofi Annan's announcement was still tinged with caution last night, as governments waited for the small print of the deal to be unveiled at the Security Council today. There it will come under close scrutiny, particularly from the United States.

Even if the US accepts the agreement, celebrations will await the text of a fresh resolution spelling out details of the new inspection regime and penalties for breaching it.

"It is decisive that this deal be held to the letter. That is why the next few weeks will be critical," Germany's defence minister, Volker Ruehe, said.

A draft of a new enforcement resolution is expected to be circulating among Security Council members by the end of this week, with a vote expected early next week. The new regime to ensure the full dismantling of all Iraq's capabilities.

History is being rewritten to skate over recent Security Council splits

ties for weapons of mass destruction, in which Saddam Hussein's palaces are to be opened for inspection by a new team of UN inspectors accompanied by diplomats, will not be in place until next month.

The written agreement which Mr Annan secured has not been seen, even by foreign ministers of Security Council member states, because the UN secretary-general had no secure communications links in Iraq or on his plane.

But Mr Cook, who had received an outline, said it met the three key points: no timetable or time limits for inspections; no restrictions on the work of UN inspectors; and access to presidential palaces which Saddam Hussein had hitherto denied.

A subtle rewriting of history was under way to skate over the divisions between Security Council members which marked the last few

weeks of crisis and US-led military deployments. Mr Cook declared yesterday that all European Union members had supported "the two-track approach of negotiations backed up by the threat of force". EU foreign ministers went along with this comforting formula.

Russia, which hailed the agreement as "a success for the entire world community", pointedly refused any praise for the Anglo-American mili-

tary build-up, and said the entire crisis had proved "the optimal way to settle conflicts is through political and diplomatic efforts".

Russia also adroitly used the crisis to shore up its position in the Middle East. It signed an agreement yesterday to provide Syria with peaceful nuclear technology, just three days after signing another with Iran to complete its Bushehr nuclear power plant.

China withheld any comment until the Security Council meets today.

The Arab world breathed a sigh of relief. Kuwait's foreign minister, Sheikh Sabah al-Sabah, said: "We don't trust Iraq. We trust the Security Council." And the Saudi government expressed its "satisfaction" at the deal, adding it hoped the Security Council would now show "the same determination" in pursuing the Middle East peace process.

But Iran warned: "Optimism is premature: America and Britain are still planning a military attack on any excuse."



Kofi Annan, UN secretary-general, and Tariq Aziz, Iraq's deputy prime minister, sign the agreement

Report by British military advisers triggers row over integration of former guerrillas in SA Army accused of blocking ANC fighters

David Beresford in Cape Town

A ROW has blown up between a team of British military advisers and the command of the South African army over allegations that the country's defence force is dragging its heels on the integration of ex-guerrillas into its ranks.

A terse exchange of correspondence between the British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT) in South Africa and the head of the army, General Reginald Otto, was tabled at a meeting of a parliamentary committee on defence yesterday.

The exchanges were precipitated by a carefully-worded, but critical report on the progress of integration in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) drawn up by BMATT in October.

Noting that integration had "moved down the SANDF's order of priorities", the report said it tied in with a "regrettable" hardening of attitudes by commanders towards what it calls "non-statutory forces" (NSF), or former guerrillas. It referred to incidents of "hostilities" and "acrimony" in the integration process. And it said it was notable that there was "little in the physical nature of army training institutions to show any ex-NSF ownership. Very few room names,

street names, flags, symbols, pictures or traditions come from the NSF."

The report drew a tart response from Gen Otto, who demanded that BMATT justify its criticism with specific examples. BMATT did so, detailing a string of incidents, in-

cluding an occasion when minutes of the army accreditation board were "deliberately changed, thus misrepresenting board members", and courts martial which seemed to be biased against ex-guer-

illas. In one case, a warrant officer had been merely reprimanded after locking three NSF officers in a room and tear-gassing them under the pretext of conducting an emergency drill.

Meanwhile, former South African president P.W. Bo-

utha, aged 82, yesterday pleaded not guilty to charges of defying the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by Desmond Tutu. He accused the Nobel laureate of malicious persecution and

conducting a witch hunt against Afrikaners.

It was the second appearance by Mr Botha before a black magistrate in his home town of George. The trial will begin on April 14.

No rioting demonstrators turned out to support him. Instead, when he arrived at court, he was greeted by about 100 ANC protesters. In response to his earlier warnings against awakening the "Ugler" in Afrikanerdom, the demonstrators held placards saying, "Afrikaner tiger meow, meow, meow", and "Botha's meow no match for Madiba's [Nelson Mandela's] roar".

But there is unease among ANC leaders over the pro-

ANC placards read: 'Afrikaner tiger meow, meow, meow'

cedure. Mr Mandela is believed to have appealed personally to Mr Botha to back off from confrontation and testify to the truth commission.

The ANC is concerned not to alienate South Africa's former white rulers. At a strategy meeting at the weekend, ANC leaders decided to engage in dialogue with Afrikaners to reassure them about their place in South Africa.

Mr Botha did not address the court yesterday. But his counsel read a six-page statement accusing the commission of being dominated by members of the ANC and Pan-Africanist Congress, and of acting "in bad faith", with "ulterior motive".

Package aims to soothe all sides

The deal

Ian Black Diplomatic Editor

DETAILS of Kofi Annan's deal with Saddam Hussein will not be made public until the UN secretary-general has reported to the Security Council today. But it is likely to consist of new arrangements for weapons inspectors and a signal that sanctions will end if Iraq meets international demands.

Mr Annan would not have signed the agreement without being fairly certain that he had stayed within the narrow guidelines laid down before his mission.

If there is any ambiguity, he will have calculated that it will then be up to the US to stick its neck out and say it has no alternative but to pursue military action.

The core of the deal provides packaging to assuage Iraqi sensitivities about the inspection of eight presidential sites where the UN suspects there may be chemical and biological weapons.

Under proposals backed by France, Britain and Russia, diplomats from the 21 countries which supervise the UN special commission, Unscim, will accompany weapons inspectors to these sites. The point for Iraq is to create the impression

that it has sidetrained Unscim, which it calls an "adversary" which cannot also be a "judge".

For the US and Britain this cosmetic trick preserves "full and unfettered access". Arrangements for inspecting the sites include prior notice. There is no deadline for the inspections to end — something the US and Britain had stressed would be unacceptable.

There may also be agreement to decrease the number of American and British personnel in Unscim, but this will depend on the readiness of other countries to provide appropriately trained experts.

Baghdad's objection to an American Unscim official, Scott Ritter, sparked the current crisis.

Difficulties ahead could include a demand by the US and Britain for a Security Council resolution sanctioning action against Iraq if it breached the agreement.

Russia, which brokered the first compromise proposal, said the accord gave UN inspectors "full unfettered access" to sites throughout Iraq. France's foreign minister, Hubert Vedrine, who had stressed his opposition to using force, cautiously welcomed it. Paris has long argued that Iraq should be offered a "light at the end of the tunnel" provided it complies with UN resolutions on eliminating its weapons of mass destruction.

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Under proposals backed by France, Britain and Russia, diplomats from the 21 countries which supervise the UN special commission, Unscim, will accompany weapons inspectors to these sites. The point for Iraq is to create the impression

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For the US and Britain this cosmetic trick preserves "full and unfettered access". Arrangements for inspecting the sites include prior notice. There is no deadline for the inspections to end — something the US and Britain had stressed would be unacceptable.

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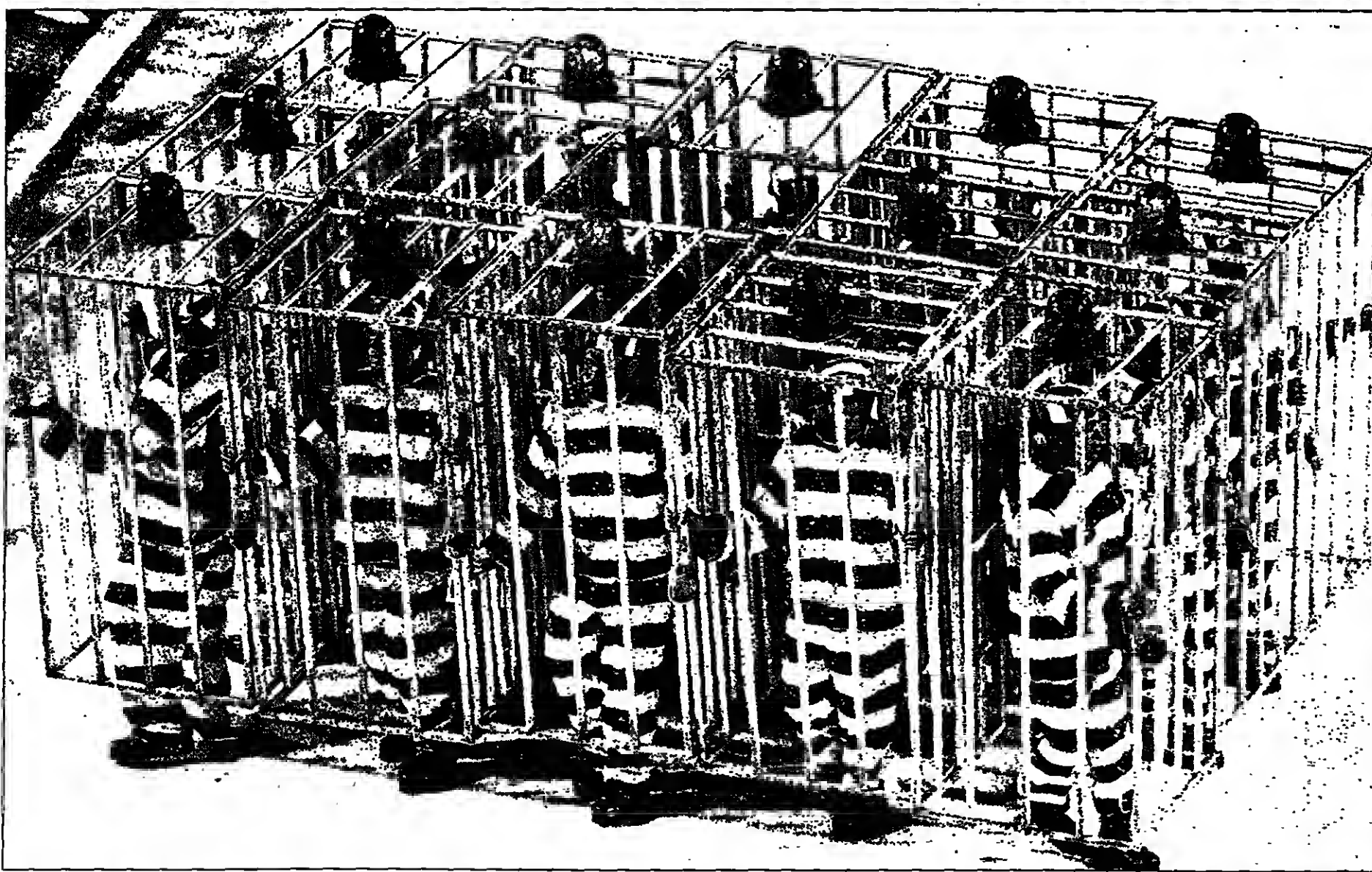
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Rio de Janeiro carnival revellers parade in prison cages yesterday. The theme of this samba group, 'Samba in your feet and hands in the air; this is a stick-up', is intended as a protest against corruption in Brazilian society

America presses Taiwan to talk with China

A procession of retired American soldiers and diplomats has been trying to bring the sides together, writes Andrew Higgins

WHEN China test-lobbed ballistic missiles towards Taiwan 12 March 1996, William Perry, then United States defence secretary, sent in two aircraft carriers and told Beijing not to tangle with "the best damn navy in the world".

Now at Stanford University, Mr Perry has returned to China's dormant though still potentially dangerous civil war, travelling discreetly to Beijing and Tai-

pei. But this time his message is directed to Taiwan: stop stalling, start talking and do not provoke Beijing.

After robust support for Taiwan two years ago, Washington is putting quiet pressure on the island to sit down and negotiate with China. This follows a visit to the US by Jiang Zemin, Communist Party leader. President Clinton is due in Beijing this year.

A procession of retired US soldiers and diplomats

has been visiting Beijing and Taipei since the start of the year. It includes the former chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, General John Shalikashvili, the former National Security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, and the man who forced through the US-brokered settlement in Bosnia, Richard Holbrooke. All travelled under business or academic cover. But each had a further purpose.

At subsequent meetings in Taipei, each of the Americans has passed on a message from Beijing: China is ready for talks "without preconditions".

The growing strength of Taiwan's opposition Demo-

cratic Progressive Party, which is pledged to an independent Taiwan, is adding urgency to the exercise.

Gen Shalikashvili told Taiwan's prime minister, Vincent Siew, that Washington would protect Taiwan's "way of life" but warned that, if Taipei moved towards indepen-

dence, "the US reaction would not be the same".

The same warning was given to Chen Shui-bian, the mayor of Taipei and the DPP's likely presidential candidate in 2000.

The US switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979. But it has remained committed, in the event of an attack, to

defend Taiwan. Pre-occupied with the Gulf and crumbling Middle East peace process, the US wants to avoid being blindsided by another flare-up in the Taiwan Strait.

Taiwan is worried. If the Communist Party is so keen on talks, why officials in Taipei, who has it not replied to letters suggesting a visit by Taiwan's top negotiator, Koo Chen-fu?

"They constantly talk to the press and make statements through their spokesmen, but we see nothing on our fax machines," Chang King-yuh, head of Taiwan's mainland affairs council, said.

Taiwan says the delay

highlights the gap between what Beijing says, particularly to the Americans, and what it does.

High-level talks were last held in 1993, when Mr Koo met Mr Wang in Singapore. Lower-level contacts have been frozen since 1995. But business ties are flourishing. Taiwan businessmen have invested up to \$38 billion on the mainland.

Both China and Taiwan claim to want to talk. But the problem is about what? Beijing prefers "principles", such as Taiwan's status in "one China". Taiwan, while embracing "one China" in abstract, wants to focus on fishing, smuggling and illegal immigrants.

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Sad

Arab view

Annan a hero

UN chief

Different same

Britain

Saddam's media hail his victory

Arab view

Julian Borger in Baghdad

IRAQI radio yesterday declared an official day of celebration to mark a historic victory over the nation's enemies. That spin on the day's events is likely to travel far beyond Iraq and deep into the Arab world, where Saddam Hussein's portrait is a common sight in street demonstrations and markets. There he is the sole candidate for the role of "Leader of the Arabs" left vacant by the passing of the Egyptian na-

tionalist, Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Most diplomats and UN observers in Baghdad believe that the Iraqi president's latest exercise in brinkmanship has left him considerably strengthened politically. He will have to put up with intrusive UN inspections for some time to come. But he won a personal undertaking from the secretary-general that the inspection process would be accelerated and that sanctions would be lifted at the end of it. In Kofi Annan's words, there would be "the light at the end of the tunnel". One diplomat who joined the line-up at Saddam International Airport to see Mr Annan on to his plane

Few observers believe Saddam Hussein is under significant internal threat

remarked: "There you have it. The rehabilitation of Saddam Hussein." Mr Annan, clearly relieved that his unpromising mission had ended in triumph, was generous in his praise for his negotiating partner, with whom he spent three hours in an imposing Baghdad palace. "The president was very well

informed and was in full control of the facts. I was grateful to him that we were frank, constructive and at the end, we were determined to settle this issue diplomatically," the Chananian diplomat said. One of Mr Annan's entourage observed that on Friday, when the secretary-general arrived, the mission was focused on finding a face-saving formula for the Iraqi leader. Yesterday, he said, "Now the problem is how to make President Clinton look good without the need to bomb."

Few foreign observers in Baghdad believe that President Saddam is under significant internal threat. There have been recent reports of assassinations of security officials in southern Iraq, but in the capital, the uniformed police are lightly armed and casual, and there are hardly any roadblocks. The security police apparatus is more formidable and appears to have instilled in the general population a potent fear of dissent, which is mingled with genuine outrage at the persistence of international sanctions. "By endless repetition on TV and radio, Saddam appears to have instilled the notion that all the problems with the sanctions are the fault of America, not him," a western diplomat said. The state-controlled media proclaimed yesterday a "banner-waving day when Iraqis

He is seen as the only Arab leader with the courage to take on the US and Israel

overcame evil will — the day when Iraqis moved forward while their enemies retreated". In a communique issued in the name of the collective Iraqi leadership under the guidance of President Saddam, the agreement was described as "the implied announcement that the politicians of the United States of

America and the British tied to their people and to the whole world". That view of events is already firmly rooted in the Arab world. Palestinian and Jordanian police have both struggled in recent days to keep pro-Saddam demonstrations under control. In the eyes of the demonstrators, he is the only Arab leader with the courage to take on the US and Israel. What the Iraqi leader has had to concede in return for these political gains will become clear only when the UN weapons inspectors resume their work. UN officials insist yesterday's deal does not alter or dilute the inspectors' right to unconditional access to

any site. If they succeed in destroying Iraq's suspected chemical and biological arsenal, President Saddam will be weakened militarily for several years at least. Diplomatic observers say that any new Iraqi attempt to block the inspectors is liable to invite a rapid and devastating US-led response with a weaker umbrella of diplomatic protection. In that case, yesterday's much hailed agreement is likely to appear in retrospect as a Faustian bargain which has bought President Saddam only a brief respite.

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Hugo Young, Martin
Woolcott, page 8

Annan will return to a hero's welcome

UN chief

Mark Tran in New York

THE United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, can expect a hero's welcome when he appears before the Security Council today for a briefing on the agreement he clinched with Saddam Hussein that has averted a military assault on Iraq. While the US continues warily to eye the agreement like a poisoned chalice, the prospects of an American strike have vastly diminished. US policy-makers admit the difficulty of launching an attack on Iraq after Mr Annan's declaration that his Baghdad deal will be acceptable to all 15 council members. President Saddam may well renege on this agreement, but for now the unassuming Mr Annan can bask in a triumph of personal diplomacy that has boosted the prestige of the UN.

The secretary-general is to be "heartily thanked and congratulated", said Richard Butler, the UN's chief weapons inspector. Some people advised Mr Annan not to enter the lion's den with President Saddam,

who humiliated then UN secretary-general Javier Perez de Cuellar in 1991. President Saddam kept Mr Perez de Cuellar waiting for hours on a peace mission that failed to avert the Gulf war. The US itself expressed scepticism about Mr Annan's mission and even reserves the right to pursue its own interest. Some congressmen have spoken more bluntly. Republican senator John McCain from Arizona, who favours a campaign to

After reverses in Somalia and Bosnia, the UN needed a success

overthrow the Iraqi president, argued at the weekend that the US was subordinating its power to the UN. For all America's cavils, Mr Annan had little choice but to go to Iraq. For the world's top diplomat to sit on the sidelines when almost the whole international community was pleading for him to help keep the peace would have been unconscionable and would have further diminished the prestige of the UN. The organisation badly

needed a success. After reverses in Somalia and Bosnia, the UN risked sinking into irrelevance. It has not embarked on any significant peacekeeping missions for two years and it has lost its appetite for sanctions as a diplomatic tool. In his first year, Mr Annan has concentrated on the worthy but hardly headline-grabbing goal of reform — the main reason he had the support of the US for the job. But despite being widely seen as Washington's man at the UN, Mr Annan may come back from Baghdad with an agreement that sticks in the administration's craw. He has already made pointed remarks in America's direction. Before his mission, he said: "We should not insist on humiliating the Iraqis." Given Iraq's habit of renegeing on agreements, this peace deal may soon be overtaken by events and America could yet unleash its warplanes on President Saddam's palaces and other targets before the year is out. Mr Annan's success would then lose its luster. But as Mr Annan's predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali used to say, a chief role of UN secretary-general is to be a scapegoat. Mr Annan, who has risen through the UN's ranks to its top job, is prepared to go from hero to scapegoat.

Different tones, same song sheet

Britain

Michael White and Ian Black

IN DIPLOMACY tone matters. So some students of Tony Blair's bullish utterances during the latest Gulf crisis have been quick to contrast them with the more nuanced speeches and interviews given by his Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook. What they purported to detect was that the Foreign Office has been less gung-ho than Downing Street in its willingness to enforce United Nations demands on Saddam Hussein with Anglo-American air strikes. Downing Street has stood shoulder to shoulder with Bill Clinton on this issue as on his Zephergate problems. Not for the first time a Labour prime minister stands accused — at least by a small but vociferous band of backbench critics at Westminster — of over-eagerly toeing the White House line. "The Government was more supportive of the American line than the American people were," one leftwinger complained. This analysis contains grains of truth. Mr Blair decided early on to back Mr Clinton, doubtless hopeful that payback would be made if he needed his friend's help over (say) a final rupture in the Northern Ireland peace talks. He was still making hawkish noises last night. Mr Blair's language has been emotive, invoking President Saddam's foul domestic record and the size of those "presidential palaces". It sounded tabloid because the Downing Street machine thinks in a tabloid way. For shared by the fastidious Foreign Office — except when it is sending off calls about Mr Cook's private life. In substance, Downing Street and the Foreign Office are adamant there was no split: diplomacy had to be backed by the threat of force. As for "splits" with the United States, Washington made State, Washington made State, clear throughout the crisis that it reserved the right to respond with air strikes if the Iraqi response to the mission of

the UN secretary-general was inadequate. At the weekend Whitehall was still insisting that, whatever answer Kofi Annan brought back from Baghdad, it would submit a new resolution to the UN Security Council. The fact that he did so well can be regarded as a feather in London's cap. The Blair government, in particular the Foreign Office, was keen to see Mr Annan put his plea for "flexibility" on all sides to the test. Mr Cook's analysts believed President Saddam wanted a way out and Mr Cook was determined to make sure he had one. If the crisis had gone the



Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, discusses the Iraqi situation in Brussels yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: PIERRE THIEBAUX

other way and Britain had urged a delay before bombing, headlines about a "split" might have been warranted. The ghost of Clem Attlee — flying to Washington to urge Truman not to "nuke" North Korea or China in 1950 — still haunts Labour imaginations. As the smaller power, British governments of most, if not all, colours (Margaret Thatcher could sometimes be an exception) favour clothing military action in UN garb

and internationalist rhetoric. By contrast the US still owes \$1 billion in dues to the UN. Last night Downing Street and the Foreign Office were confident that Sunday's Baghdad agreement will be enshrined in a new UN resolution — which will enable a "rapid reaction" if Baghdad tries to dodge again. That may be wishful thinking by an inexperienced administration: President Saddam may be back soon enough to plague a diplomatically weaker alliance. Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, warned last night that the latest breathing space should be used to



David Sharrock in Jerusalem

address Israel's non-compliance with UN resolutions, which embitters Arab moderates. Senior Tories with experience of war and diplomacy were reasonably satisfied with the Blairite baptism of fire. "I think Blair felt he had no choice but to stand firm, both because of his friendship with Clinton and because he knew people would be judging him against Margaret," one ex-minister said.



Iraqis celebrate in Baghdad yesterday as the end of the talks between Kofi Annan and Saddam Hussein was announced. The state media had proclaimed it a "banner-waving day when Iraqis overcame evil will". PHOTOGRAPH: DARKO BANDIC

Clinton left to face Lewinsky case

US politics

Martin Kettle in Washington

WITH his international crisis suddenly on hold, President Clinton yesterday prepared for another bruising week in the bitter domestic crisis over his relationship with the former White House intern, Monica Lewinsky. The prospect of a settlement of the latest stand-off with Iraq may have brought relief in many world capitals, but in Washington it merely heightened the sense of Mr Clinton's vulnerability, depriving him for the moment of the opportunity to rally the nation behind

military action and ensuring that his enemies will feel freer to attack him over Iraq and Ms Lewinsky. Like the White House, the president's Republican opponents were waiting for the details of the Iraq deal to become clear before committing themselves, but the Senate majority leader, Trent Lott, cautioned that Mr Clinton was "in a very awkward position" as a result of the agreement brought back from Baghdad by the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan. "I was worried that this initiative by Annan was going to put the president in a box and that's exactly what has happened," Mr Lott said. "This is another example of how the administration's foreign policy is subcontracted to others."

In the House of Representatives, Speaker Newt Gingrich said: "I hope Mr Annan has gotten a good agreement." He warned that the White House must be "ready for immediate action" if Iraq reneges on the deal. Another senior Republican, Senator Arlen Specter, said: "One way or another we're going to have to topple Saddam Hussein." With Ms Lewinsky likely to give evidence before the grand jury this week or next, the president and his lawyers are shaping up to battle with the special prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, over Clinton's claim to executive privilege over conversations with top aides. The White House has argued that the claim — which enables evidence to be withheld from Mr Starr

— applies to secret service personnel and to Mr Clinton's longtime aide and confidant Bruce Lindsey, who was called before the grand jury last week. But there is some trepidation in the White House about claiming executive privilege because it was used by President Richard Nixon during the Watergate crisis. To add to its problems, the White House has been forced to deny that it engaged private investigators to examine political opponents or members of Mr Starr's staff. Mr Clinton's spokesman Mike McCurry said late on Sunday that accusations in Time magazine and comments by a former Reagan administration prosecutor, Joseph DiGenova, were "blatant lies".

Conflict 'only postponed'

Israel

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

ISRAEL cast a sceptical eye yesterday over the apparent ending of the Iraq crisis, with the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu warning that it might amount to no more than a postponement of regional conflict. "Just because Saddam Hussein backed down at this moment does not mean he will not start up again in a few months," Mr Netanyahu said. If it was true that Saddam had

accepted "free and unfettered access" for UN weapons inspectors "that is good news, but I cannot tell you if that is the case yet". Rebutting widespread criticism of his government's handling of the crisis, Mr Netanyahu spoke of a "new Middle East of missiles" and the need for constant preparedness against attack. For this reason, he said, the national state of alert and distribution of gas masks had been useful. "The efforts we undertook in the last few weeks will stand us in good stead for many years to come," Mr Netanyahu said. Distribution centres will continue their

work this week and the government is yet to decide whether or not to make anti-anthrax pills available to the public. The Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat welcomed the deal as "a very important step to achieving peace" in the Middle East. A marked lessening of tension in the Occupied Territories will reduce pressure on his Palestinian Authority. Israelis and Palestinians appear to agree on one important fact: that international pressure will now mount for concerted efforts in the Middle East peace process. Opposition politicians hauled Mr Netanyahu over

the coals for his handling of the Iraq crisis. Labour announced it was ending its emergency co-operation and would present a new no-confidence motion in the Knesset next week. Most newspaper editorials said Mr Netanyahu and his ministers had demonstrated a lack of leadership and spread panic by sending mixed messages about the likelihood of an Iraqi attack with biological or chemical weapons. Meanwhile, more than a thousand high-ranking reserve officers in the Israel Defence Force called yesterday for a unilateral withdrawal from the zone Israel occupies in south Lebanon.

In their own words

What [Annan] is saying is encouraging... If he has got the kind of deal that appears to be emerging, he has moved Saddam a long way

Foreign Secretary
Robin Cook

It was diplomacy. Wise, balanced, UN world diplomacy that enabled us to reach this agreement. Not sabre-rattling

Iraqi deputy prime minister
Tariq Aziz

Tonight the issue has been practically resolved... [Saddam] Hussein gave his word

Russian president
Boris Yeltsin

The US has made serious miscalculations twice: once in 1991 when they didn't finish Saddam; and now because they strongly and wrongly believed that Saddam would not back down... We have to admit that Saddam has achieved a victory

Former head of Iraqi military intelligence
Wafiq Samaraei

I was worried that this initiative by Annan was going to put the president in a box and that's exactly what's happened

US Senate majority leader
Trent Lott

I would have preferred to see Iraq destroyed and all Iraqis butchered and be saints, rather than let them search [Saddam's] bedrooms

Libyan leader
Muammar Gaddafi

Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

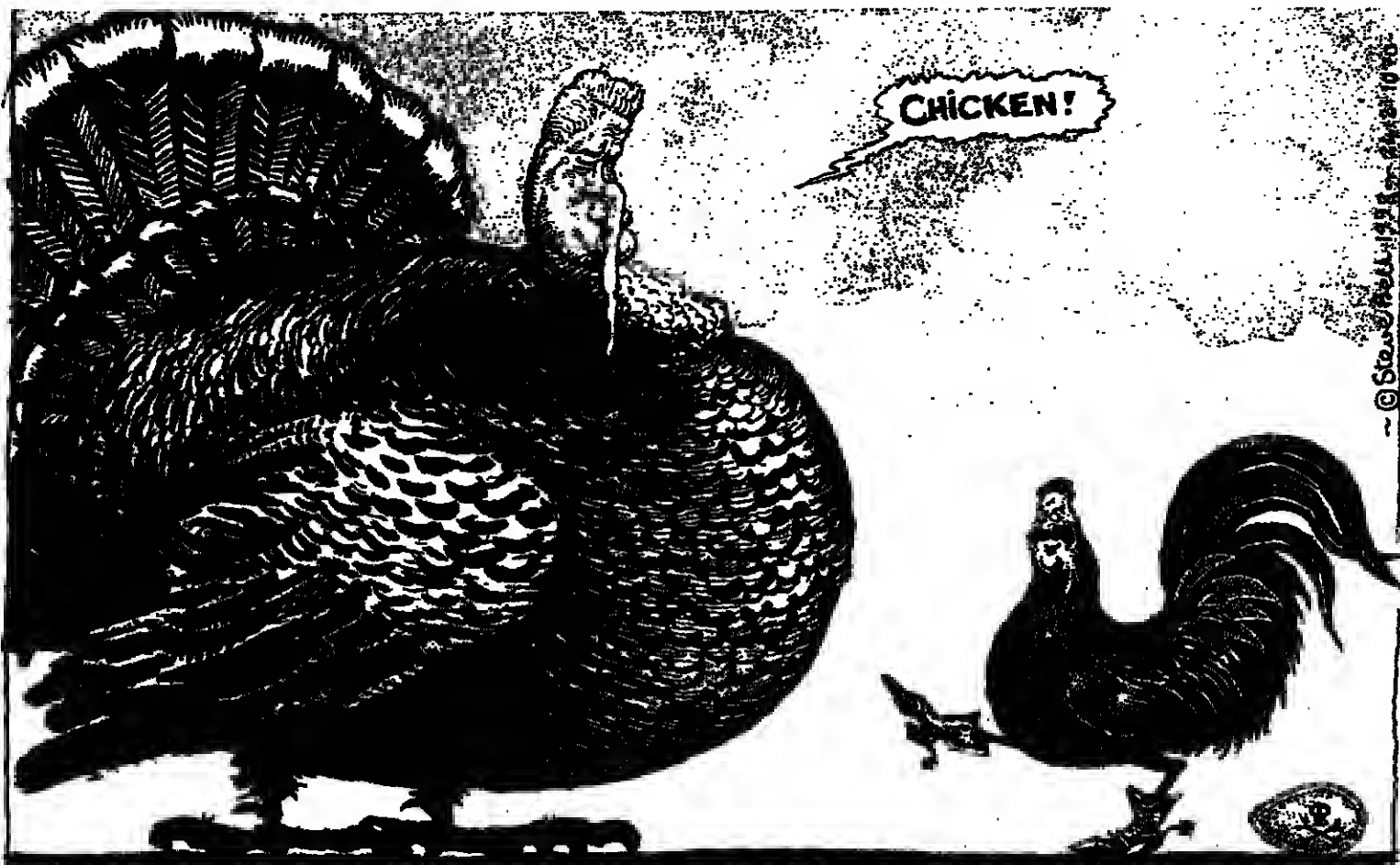
FALLING victim to the reticence that adds so much to his lovable nature, my friend Lord Andrew Lloyd-Webber announces his 50th birthday party with a full page advertisement in the London Evening Standard. Beside a picture of Andrew sitting at his piano and grinning, the ad lists those among the "stars" due to attend: Glenn Close, Michael Ball, his brother Julian, his ex-missus Sarah Brightman and Donny Osmond will all be at the Royal Albert Hall party on April 7. Mindful of the legendary urinal-clearing incident at the Lyceum, we call the Albert Hall to check on facilities. "I can't tell you exactly how many urinals we have," says a spokesman, "but we have a Gents and a Ladies on each floor." Fingers crossed, then. Proceeds from the hash will go to the National Youth Music Theatre. Nice to see Andrew putting something back into music, having taken so much over the years.

A neven nobler Lord is busier than ever. On Saturday, Jeffrey Archer supported International Tourist Day, by taking on the role of guest conductor... not at a musical concert to celebrate Andrew's life, but on a Number 11 bus. His Lordship, who offered guided tours around Paul's, Westminster and Docklands, would want it made absolutely clear that this was a purely altruistic gesture, quite unconnected with any campaign to become Mayor of London.

TAKING a well-deserved break from Iraq, the Foreign Secretary writes to the letters page to complain about the item concerning his meeting with Salman Rushdie last week. "Your column failed to state that the week I met Mr Rushdie," writes Cook, "coincided with the ninth anniversary of the fatwa." This was a serious omission, and I can only apologise. All that actually appeared in the Diary was: "Festive for the latest triumph goes to the Foreign Office, which hosted the meeting on Monday, after the ninth anniversary of the Ayatollah's fatwa." Skimming may be all right with trivia like the Scott Report, Cook, but we really must concentrate with our weightier reading material.

FROM what the BBC calls its "news programme strategy" review, comes mixed news for BBC's political programme, The Record, which goes out four mornings a week at 8.30am. The overall viewing figures are not good, with between 100,000-200,000 watching each day — serious people are all tuned to the heavyweight political channel, GMTV, waiting for Mr Tony Blair — however, it does seem that the programme is building for the future. No fewer than 40 per cent of the audience, the review observes, are under nine years old (many of them former stars of Mandy Patinkin's Milkbank election hit squad).

I AM delighted to announce a new member of staff for this column. The Reverend Steve Chalke has accepted the important post of Diary Vicar. "I'm delighted," he said yesterday, when formally offered the position. "Would it be a regular thing? Let's just see how it goes. The key came to our attention, you may recall, when a press release about his endless media activities, sent by his own PR firm, described him as the man who most coherently defines the zeitgeist. His first sermon will be an examination of the Biblical quotation: 'the meek shall inherit the earth' (Matthew 5:5)."



So we're not going to war. Good: that's what the people wanted

Hugo Young



KOPI ANNAN has saved Bill Clinton, saved Saddam Hussein and, in a minor key, saved Tony Blair. He made all their stances succeed. He saved the peace. Could there be a nobler task for a secretary-general of the United Nations? The deal he did protect Iraq from a savage bombing, and apparently secured the major promise he was sent to get, the reinstatement of the freedom of the UN weapons inspectorate. At the heart of the matter, however, is the retreat this deal offers Mr Clinton and Mr Blair from being obliged to start a war that might well have destroyed their reputations as world statesmen.

Without the threat of bombing, Saddam would not have conceded. His record shows that very plainly. So it is important the threat was made credible. But it was also very, very important that it should not be executed. Mercifully, it seems to have had sufficient credibility with Saddam. But it lacked credibility with the people on whom its perpetrators depend, their voters. They weren't looking for something about the frailty of the basis on which foreign policy these days is made. Western leaders failed to yoke military aggression in democratic consent, a fact that surely has as deep a bearing on the future as Saddam's climb-down.

The hardware is awesome, but the justification for using it was totally ineffective. When Secretary Albright went to middle America to explain the policy, she was harassed and derided. Though Congress has its quota of hawks, there was an uncertain majority for the policy as described. Newsweek's weekend poll found only 18 per cent of Americans favouring this policy of limited air-strikes, and 39 per cent wanting continued diplomacy. For all yesterday's portentous huffing from the White House, echoed by the

faithful British Foreign Office, about waiting to see what Mr Annan has brought back, it immediately became inconceivable that the US and Britain would insist on bombing regardless. They know that, if they did, they would supplant Saddam as pariahs of the world.

This is because so many people have failed to believe the case they've made. Bombing is heavy aggression. The people need to accept and support the purpose it is meant to serve. In this case they don't even, precisely, know the purpose. Even the military were at pains, in the last few days, to destroy the politicians' illusion that bombing was a matter of pain-free electronic targeting. Evo Clinton said it would neither destroy all Saddam's stockpiles nor guar-

Four days' non-stop bombing, which was the US-UK plan, could have achieved a lot of ruin without securing a military, let alone a political, objective

tee against his resuming chemical and biological warfare production. Still less would it eliminate the man himself, which the poll says 36 per cent of Americans would support. Locked into a half-baked policy — hard wars massive, strategy confused — Clinton and his staff failed to make any other case. At bottom, then, that Saddam is a menacing tyrant, against whom something unpleasant must be done.

In Britain, the response to this was acquiescent. Show the British establishment a glimpse of warfare, and they will send all-party Americans even before our boys get near the battlefield. And sometimes this is right. In Bosnia, quiet and patient military intervention for policing purposes is doing good. But in the

case of Iraq, the official logic was no more persuasive here than in Columbus, Ohio. Confronting with ministers, I realised that in their hearts they were far from sure the policy was right. They went along with it, and the Commons voted overwhelmingly. But the belief that bombing Iraq, if actually carried out, would have a purpose they could describe and defend was a hypothesis they confronted with palpable discomfort.

They knew, in effect, what the people suspected: that four days' non-stop bombing, which has emerged as the US-UK plan, could have achieved a lot of ruin without securing a military, let alone a political, objective. Saddam would have remained, inspection would have stopped, and they themselves would be ex-

posed as leaders more prepared to use their weaponry than to think about the outcome. This set of political consequences is extremely inconvenient. Saddam is the gainer. He may well have brought the end of sanctions closer. His concession on weapons inspection is not, in reality, of the highest importance to him. He has made inspection a big issue of face and tactics for many years, but it's not as if he now has to account to his people for any loss of national dignity. His lethal weaponry has always, in any case, been virtually undeployable against an outside enemy. If, as a result of conceding on inspections, he eventually secures re-admission to at least part of the normal world, he will be able to reckon it a victory, and perhaps point in

Washington and London as his allies in supplying it. Unpleasant though this is to contemplate, it throws light on the realities of Western politics. These place severe limits on an interventionist foreign policy. All American politicians, and many American voters, say yes to getting rid of Saddam Hussein. But, short of another Kuwait-like outrage, they will never support the land war necessary to achieve it. Merely preventive action, fancifully to preclude a gas or germ attack that hasn't taken place, and damage the leader who is developing the power to make it, simply does not enjoy the necessary support.

That is a profound and salutary development, an inhibition on the leaders of great and second-order powers alike. It suggests that the role of world policeman, which only the US is equipped to carry out, is one that's as likely to engage the scepticism of Americans as that of numerous other countries, not least in the Middle East. It certainly says that American officials who want to exercise such a role must find a more sophisticated explanation than Mrs Albright's. "If we have to use force," she said on NBC last week, "it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future."

What the people are saying is that this is not enough. Flabby talk that won't impress many enemies or, eventually, friends. Let there, at least, be a credible linkage between ends and means. Let us not make threats, when the consequences of executing them will be as problematic, even on favourable assumptions, as they would be from bombing and an end to them in principle. Saddam's Iran. This is painful for leaders, but it's the people's contribution. Get your act together, they say, before the next time — or never be believed again.

We will have avoided a bad war only in order to make a bad peace

guilty of prevarication and passivity, in that all of them desired the fall of Saddam but none would ever say so or do much that was significant to bring it about. Finally, a seg-

Three lives shattered

Paul Foot



I WRITE this almost exactly a year after the release of the three men wrongly convicted of the 1978 murder of the newspaper boy Carl Bridgewater.

Where are the three now? Two of them are in hospital. Jimmy Robinson is recovering from a major operation on his kidneys. His friend Carol Bradbury, with whom he was living when he was arrested in December 1978, visits him every day and says his spirits and sense of humour are still high. "He has braved his way through, rather than copped," she says.

George Irving, the actor who played the part of Jimmy Robinson in the BBC drama documentary Bad Company, has become in real life his devoted friend and supporter. He encouraged Jimmy to talk to Malcolm Tierney, another actor who campaigned for the release of the three.

The result was a one-man play, Just Not Fair, based entirely on Jimmy's experiences and rich vocabulary. The play was universally praised and will soon be produced as a one-night Platform at the National Theatre.

MICHAEL Hickey never recovered from his astonishing 90-day protest demonstration on the roof of Gartree prison in the freezing winter of 1983-84. He is still seriously ill, and from time to time returns to a psychiatric clinic in Birmingham. He is assisted by his mother, Ann Wilean, who led the campaign to expose the injustice, and his girlfriend Michelle Beswick, who shares his council flat in Bromsgrove.

Michelle pays tribute to the "fantastic support" we have had from everyone round here — neighbours, shopkeepers, everyone. Michael is a lovely person, so like his Mum, but too often he just can't cope.

Michael's cousin Vincent lives in Redditch with his mother, Ann Skett, a factory worker all her life until she was invalided out with industrial asthma. She never for a moment lost her faith in her son's innocence. She tells me Vincent suffers often from intense anguish but is gradually coming through.

The damage done by such injustice can never be put right — the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four and all the other victims have testified to that.

As so often, the authorities responsible for amassing so many human pieces to smithereens have left it to ordinary people to try to put them together again. A year ago, the Director of Public Prosecutions at last publicly admitted that

the men's convictions had been wrongly secured through the most blatant police fabrication of confession evidence. So far, however, there has been not a word from the Director's office about the prosecution of any of the police officers involved.

Officers accused of fabricating evidence in the Birmingham and Guildford cases were prosecuted and sent off. Perhaps the Director has taken this process a stage further — and decided there is really no point in prosecuting anyway. Meanwhile, and by the way, who killed Carl Bridgewater? In that question the combined authorities of our criminal justice system show not the slightest interest.

Was this boy's murderer by any chance a freemason? I only ask because so many of the police officers in the case were on the square, probably in the same lodge. I have always been suspicious of dark stories of Masonic conspiracies, but I make an exception in the case of the late, lamented West Midlands serious crimes squad, Chris Mullin MP, chairman of the Commons Home Affairs Select Committee, maintains that there are more than 30 interlocking cases of gross injustice arising from fabrication of evidence, bullying and torturing suspects in custody by a gang of officers from that squad.

In one case recently decided by the Court of Appeal, a group of officers put a paper bag over Derek Treadaway's head until he made an entirely false confession to a crime he did not do, for which he served a long prison sentence.

Many if not all the officers concerned in such cases were freemasons. Their masonic links did not automatically make them liars and bullies, but did it help to shield their abominable behaviour from discovery and from punishment? That question can only start to be answered if we know the names of police officers who are masons. Chris Mullin's committee is absolutely right to demand the relevant names from the Grand Lodge and to deploy the full array of

Many if not all the officers concerned in miscarriages were freemasons

Parliament's democratic powers to enforce the disclosure.

AFTER the election last May, Tony Blair warned new Labour MPs not to indulge in the triumphalist slogan attributed to Bartley Shrewcross after the 1945 Labour landslide: "We are the masters now."

Blair's former pupil-master, the Lord Chancellor Lord Irvine, who has spared some of Scotland's art treasures for display in his parental residence, has obviously taken the warning to heart, and has slightly adapted the slogan to something much more appropriate to new Labour: "Ours are the Masters now."

Iran, which fears and hates Saddam, will now assign a higher priority to its own programmes both for weapons of mass destruction and for subversive efforts in Iraq? Is it not understandable if Netanyahu, pointing to a more serious Iraqi threat, will be fortified in his obstruction of genuine negotiations with the Palestinians? Would it be surprising if Turkey should start bargaining with Saddam and looking for a settlement of what Ankara sees as the chaotic situation in northern Iraq? Might it not be understandable if the Iraqi Kurds, or some of them, felt they had to come to terms with Baghdad? Might not the United States itself lose heart and either turn away or engage in risky adventures? There may be relief at the apparent success of Annan's mission, but there should be no rejoicing.

Handwritten signature or mark at the bottom of the page.

A deal that can satisfy

Kofi Annan gets it right

THE AGREEMENT reached in Baghdad by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan is a significant achievement — even before the fine print analysis begins. It accepted by the Security Council it will have prevented a war whose consequences were dangerously unpredictable, yet it will have done so without conceding peace at any price. It should deliver a deal which, on the evidence yesterday, has no fatal defects and presents a reasonable chance of satisfying the interests of all parties to it. It is a tribute to Mr Annan, and an important boost to the organisation which he represents, that this has been realised through his efforts. Indeed it could not have been achieved without him. It is also a mark of an agreement more likely to last that it allows all parties concerned to claim that they have emerged with their objectives and principles intact.

President Clinton and his advisers need have no problem in claiming success — if (as we hope) they concur with the agreement. The threat of force by two members of the Security Council was evidently a very important factor, however much Iraq may now deny it. As Mr Annan told the press conference in Baghdad yesterday morning, you can do a lot with diplomacy, but a lot more if it is backed up by "firmness and force." Saddam Hussein has agreed to deliver what he refused to when the crisis began: was that not what it was all about? There will be details in the package with which Washington will be

less than happy. But the three key issues on which assurance was sought — unfettered access by the inspectors, the right to repeat visits, and the absence of a timetable — have apparently been safeguarded. If the purpose was to use force as an adjunct to diplomacy and not vice versa, Mr Clinton should be able to insist that it had its effect.

Saddam Hussein also emerges in an advantageous position: this may seem an unjust outcome for a thuggish dictator with no redeeming features, but success in negotiations does not imply moral approbation. For a leader so often characterised as psychotic, insane or blind to normal argument, he has negotiated quite rationally from his own perspective. The crucial concession on the absence of any timetable was made in classic negotiating style right at the last moment. He will benefit from the relief of his own people, and his neighbours, that the war threat has been lifted. If he is seen to have made concessions, that will hardly harm his image either. Of course the agreement has worsened the chances of any internal challenge to his leadership — but the US and its Gulf allies have never shown enthusiasm for venturing into that area of the unknown.

The British government may also present its own efforts in a favourable light. Robin Cook was quick to do so yesterday morning when he suggested that Britain had played a leading role in assembling the Security Council mandate which allowed Mr Annan to go to Baghdad. Britain also appears to have had a restraining effect on American impatience with the diplomatic track, both by asking hard questions about the purpose of any military action, and by insisting that such action would have to be preceded by some kind of new Security Council resolution. If indeed Britain has played its traditional role of working from within to soften

the rough edge of US policy, it has kept this well concealed. But we may expect to hear more about it as the crisis recedes.

Will the agreement, once held up to more searching light, really come up to expectations? There are already clues in the remarks yesterday from Mr Annan and Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz at their joint press conference. Mr Annan said that it would satisfy both the "spirit" and the "intent" of the relevant UN resolutions — implying that some details may be varied. Mr Aziz stressed that it was a "balanced" document which had been concluded in the hope that sanctions would be lifted soon. Clearly the deal will embody some of the "flexibility" for which Mr Annan first called two weeks ago when he made his first diplomatic intervention. But there is nothing wrong with being flexible if it secures compliance. The burden of proof will rest with Saddam Hussein to deliver. That means that the inspectors must be able to enter the presidential palaces with full authority, no matter how many "men in suits" may accompany them. Yesterday Mr Aziz claimed there was no problem about this — indeed that a full inspection would reveal no weapons programme and therefore hasten final resolution of the whole process. There is a big gap between word and deed, but Saddam may be more likely to deliver what has now been committed to writing if — in the phrase widely used yesterday — there is some "light at the end of the tunnel." Here too Mr Cook may have given an important signal on Sunday when he suggested that sanctions could be lifted "in the fairly near future."

The person in this whole affair with the strongest claim to our approval is Kofi Annan. He waited his time on the sidelines until he judged the moment was right. He has handled the prickly constituents on

both sides with skill and tact, while insisting on the integrity of the UN and its resolutions. It is a rare negotiator who can operate in such contentious middle ground: no previous UN Secretary-General of recent years would have managed to do it. By bringing his text in person back to the UN, Mr Annan is also quite legitimately doing his best to ensure a positive reception for it while leaving the final decision to the Security Council.

If the Secretary-General succeeds, he will have done something to restore the authority of the UN — in danger of being bypassed by unilateral military action. This may in turn allow some of the good intentions declared after the 1990-91 Gulf War to be addressed again in the Middle East. Such as reviving the peace process, moving towards democratic governance, curbing the arms race, and putting an end to military threats from any quarter. These are remote visions at the moment, but they are surely worth encouraging after so many bad dreams.

Eternal bang

Yet existence remains a mystery

IN THE beginning, according to the second sentence of Genesis, the earth was without form and void. Not a bad description of a process that during the past 30 years scientists have made mind-boggling progress in understanding. We now know that the universe started from the nuclear explosion of a minute "virtual particle" of infinite density — the nearest thing to nothingness. The big mystery is what exactly it was that happened during the first one thousandth of a second (dramatically unmentioned by Genesis) when the future direction and shape of the universe was determined. And

the most critical part, according to Stephen Hawking and his Cambridge colleague Neil Turok this week (writing in *Physics Letters*) is what happened in the first trillion, trillionth of a second. This may dictate whether the universe will go on expanding forever or whether (as rival scientists still argue) it will decelerate by enough to be caught by gravitational forces which will compel it to contract — an implosion that would take it over billions of years back to the minute particle whence we all came. ("Dust thou wert and to dust thou wilt return").

It is difficult enough for the lay person to grasp the fractions involved (not many school rulers measure trillion trillionths) let alone what all this might be trying to tell us. Fortunately, for harmony among mankind the rival theories are sufficiently broad-church to house both atheists and believers: the former argue that we now have a complete explanation of existence and need look no further, the latter that such a miracle of physics must have had an external cause. The Hawking argument that time has a beginning but no end will make posterity sleep more soundly and ought in a small way to enhance the virtues of peacemaking and environmental control since our stewardship of the earth can no longer be seen as temporary. Philosophers will doubtless argue whether it is possible to talk of a notion of existence before Big Bang even though scientists argue that it is when time and space began. Above all, it ought to give us all a sense of infinite humility at the awesomeness of all that has been happening. That the entire universe erupted from a minute speck to which it could return but probably won't, will surely remain a mystery among mysteries however much scientists agree that they have found the complete explanation.

Letters to the Editor

Of cartoons and condoms

YOUR headline yesterday (BBC ends fly-on-the-wall documentaries) might give a misleading impression of the facts. Documentary programmes will remain a cornerstone of the BBC1 schedule. Our ambition is to ensure diversity and innovation in this important genre. We need not be defensive about observational series such as *Driving School* and *Hotel* that engage the audience and illustrate lives in a truthful and informative way. The dangers of imitation and saturation are well understood but the richly diverse tradition of BBC documentary-making has been reinforced by these successes, not side-tracked. Peter Salmon, Controller, BBC1, London.

RECENTLY worked as a BT call handler (Orwellian call centres, February 21). It was not unusual to receive 50 calls in one hour: with the telephone programmed to bring in a call within one second of a finished call. This work was very tiring, particularly as we had to read from a computer screen. Each call was supervised and if you didn't get in the "closing salutation" you would be assigned to retraining. Sarah Adams, Bristol.

I WAS amused by the alarm about cartoons rotting the brain cells of our young (Doh guys Get with the toons, February 23). As a child in the 1960s, I was far more interested in Wacky Races and Dastardly and Muttley than Blue Peter. Somehow, despite this handicap, I managed to get an Oxbridge degree, and now manage a university department. My only fear for the "peaky kids" of today is that they don't understand all the references in an episode of *The Simpsons*. Antony Brewerton, Oxford.

SO Philip Larkin was a typical victim (Cake-lovers, February 21)? What does that make the rest of his generation who, in 1943, were not asked about our plans but were directed by the Ministry of Labour. Not for us the drudgery of the librarian's lot. I was directed to the RAF. The girl who is now my wife was directed to the Rover factory to work on Spitfire engines. Three of my classmates were directed to their deaths in various theatres of war. But then we were neither artistic nor Oxford graduates. John Powell, Stratford Upon Avon.

NOW that the domes of Greenwich have started to reproduce (Row erupts over dome management, February 23), isn't it time to advocate the use of condoms? Chris McDonnell, Little Haywood, Staffs.

That lost liner by Ed Lear has already been published. I fear though it's true that "bombitious" (you should be more punctious!) is the one word that doesn't appear (See Corrections and Clarifications, Page 16). CJC Wharfedale, Chislehurst, Kent.

Anne Begg does the disabled no favours

YOUR interview with Labour MP Anne Begg (Fighting prejudice from a wheelchair, February 23) graphically illustrates many of the problems inherent in New Labour's stance on welfare reform in this area. She rightly points out that disabled people should not be seen as a homogeneous group, but her pronouncements on welfare reform ignore this. She wrongly assumes that because she has struggled to work and has been uniquely successful in becoming Britain's first disabled woman MP, other sick and disabled people can too. Many cannot. In some cases this is because they live in areas where there are no suitable jobs. In others it is because they are too sick or disabled to work or because they could only work erratically due to ill-health.

New Labour's stance on welfare benefits is punitive and ill-conceived. People who receive benefits and also

lately depend upon them feel under attack. And if, like myself, they are too ill to undertake paid work, they often feel guilty as well. I do not deny that the welfare state needs rethinking, but this requires wide-ranging and constructive discussion so that any new policies are a genuine improvement on existing ones. It also requires a lot of detailed hard work. At present we have the worst of all worlds. Government leaks and pronouncements and interviews with MPs like Anne Begg are contributing to a punitive climate which is negatively affecting the perceptions and self-perceptions of people who receive benefits. Rhetorical phrases like "welfare to work" and "welfare dependency" are being imported from America with little thought. And very few concrete ideas about how to make the welfare system work. Discards are being produced. Sadly, instead of stimulating

ing a wide-ranging debate, New Labour seems to be adopting a neo-Thatcherite rhetoric which has a decidedly non-inclusive feel to it. Dr Veronica Beechey, London.

I AM chronically disabled, and suffer constant discomfort. I tend to injure myself easily and find myself in hospital because of this — three months last year, for example. Two days a week in a local college is as much as I can manage. It's unpaid — the very idea I choose to use the very benefits currently at risk, particularly DLA, to help fund me. I do not consider myself lazy, nor does anyone who knows me.

Anne Begg is clearly a very driven individual. Most people, disabled and otherwise, are not; they work to live and are defined not by their jobs, but by a whole range of interests. Disability can prove too much for many to overcome, dangling post-

ive role models before them as some kind of norm simply increases their sense of inferiority. I know, this morning, it increased mine. Tom Seldon, Liverpool.

ANNE Begg states that an individual can be "empowered" by being economically active. By making such a crude statement, Ms Begg is beginning to sound like William Wadsworth in his attempts to justify the ill-named Citizen's Charter. Like Wadsworth, Ms Begg appears to have a very narrow and short-sighted notion of empowerment, and thus of active citizenship. Surely she does not believe that a disabled person who is not "economically active", and therefore by default not "empowered", is any less worthy than their economically active counterparts? Perhaps if Ms Begg had read the recent paper from John Prescott's department

on "democratic renewal" in local government she would have a better understanding of the matter. Dr Andy Asquith, University of Luton.

YOU describe Anne Begg MP as "Britain's first ever permanently disabled MP." I'm sure that Winston Churchill, who had dyslexia, Jack Ashley, who was profoundly deaf until his cochlear implant, and David Blunkett, would all find this description somewhat bizarre. Only 2 per cent of disabled people are wheelchair-users — Anne Begg is the first MP from this group.

Also it is wrong to say that wheelchair-users don't normally get criticised. There are a rising number of reports of abuse ranging from verbal to serious physical assaults on disabled people — has Anne Begg never been told she is a "fire hazard"? Steve Francis, Leeds.

Pulling the unfinished symphony out of the bonfire of history

HAVING listened to the recent performance of Elgar's "third" symphony, I feel Mark Lawson (Second thoughts, February 19) is too dogmatic when he argues for an end to the practice of completing artists' unfinished works. How much poorer would our artistic legacy be if certain works had not been completed or orchestrated, or if the composer's or writer's instructions to destroy their work had been followed?

The problem is where to draw the line. Do you complete works that are finished and leave those that exist only as sketches — certainly the case with Elgar's "third"? Do you ignore artists who have achieved a long creative life but address those whose career was tragically curtailed (Schubert, Mozart)? Elgar's family rightly concluded that, since the music would come out of copyright in 2005, it was preferable to have the symphony finished by a capable and sensitive musician than to run the risk of crasser completions assailing our ears in seven or eight years' time. And as with the Elgar, I believe that you should treat each case individually: ultimately, market forces apply to artistic endeavours, and the public will decide.

Satisfyingly Elgarian as is Anthony Payne's completion, I have a sneaking suspicion that we shall witness a minor rash of performances over the coming few years but that it will slowly slip out of the repertoire. Elgar, had he lived, might have finished the symphony, or might have destroyed the sketches himself. We shall never know. But if you had witnessed Rubens, or Shakespeare, or Bach, making a bonfire of his canvases, manuscripts or scores, would you have rushed to rescue unburned fragments the minute his back was turned? I know I would. Philip J. Evison, London.

Wallpapered into a corner

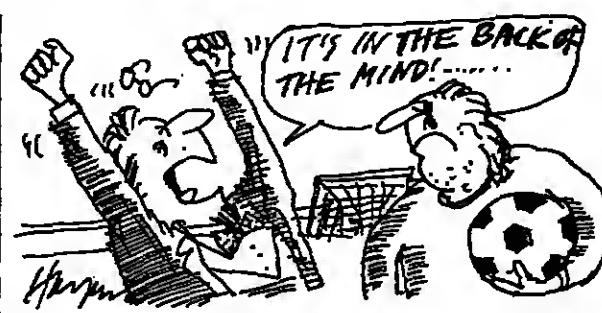
AS A LEGAL aid practitioner and lifetime Labour supporter I found the Lord Chancellor's recent extravagance in spending \$650,000 on his Westminster flat both offensive and irresponsible (Irvine under fire left and right, February 18). With an increase of legal aid rates averaging 2p per hour over the last five years, small wonder that droves of high street lawyers are either closing down or seeking better rewards in commercial firms. I just hope that not all lawyers will be tarred with the brush because the head of our profession shows such execrable taste in his furnishings. The behaviour, if not the wallpaper, is best described as shabby. Alan Bridger, Bradford.

ON LORD Irvine's loan of paintings (Irvine denies guilt in hanging offence, February 21) the key questions are: Will any interested individual be permitted to see one or more of these works, be-

quested or purchased from the public purse, on request without undue delay? Will they be available for lending subject to conservation safeguards if requested for an exhibition by a legitimate organisation? Are the conditions in which they are to be kept appropriate for art works of this material kind?

All other issues are irrelevant for "cellars" read "safe storage", for "conservators" read "restorers" and the carefully vetted "for reserve" read "awaiting their turn to be hung in the main galleries", for "first class paintings" read pictures that Lord and Lady Irvine happen to like. Prof Mervyn Pinpoint, Department of Art History, University of Manchester.

THE absurdity of the press attacks on Lord Irvine, whom I have known for 30 years, is beginning to make the case for a right to privacy for public persons in public affairs. John Griffiths, Marlow, Bucks.



In pursuit of the professional foul

SO THREE MPs have put down an early-day motion criticising a football referee (Barnsley MPs invoke Old Trafford penalty clause, February 21). May I suggest that they take it a little further to encompass footballers too? Teachers and parents have been blamed for the behaviour of today's youth, but all-permeating football has, I think, a much more malign influence. Highly paid footballers are idols to young boys and increasingly to young girls — yet what do they do week in and week out? Paul Gascoigne's behaviour is well-

known yet he is still picked for England. David Beckham mouths obscenities at the referee (children can lip-read) yet he gets a many Posh Spice. Teddy Sheringham cynically pulls away an opponent at a free kick and is our World Cup striker. Graham Rix has a television programme devoted to his training of the Chelsea youth team, and much of his language is unacceptable. Should he be allowed to have charge of young people? Teachers using such language would soon be out of work. Maureen Wood, Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

Poetic injustice

MOST of the Halifax severs excluded from the share issue are former black Commonwealth residents of this country. British citizens who have returned to their countries of origin. Restrictions on public life, February 21). My mother is a pensioner who lived in Britain for 25 years but now resides in Jamaica. When I enquired on her behalf about her share entitlement, I was told that Jamaica's local laws prevented her from receiving her share allocation. I raised the matter with the Jamaican High Commission, who informed me in writing that "there are no restrictions and no laws on our books which impose such restriction." They added that "people today are paid dividends of all sorts... in Jamaica without difficulties." When I put this to the Consumer Service Manager of my local British branch of the Halifax, I was told that that was the end of the matter as far as they were concerned. Linton Kweal Johnson, London.

Is the march on behalf of all country-dwellers — or those who own land?

ROBIN Hanbury-Tenison of the Countryside Alliance writes the most extraordinary defence of the actions of those supporting the Countryside March (Letters, February 23). First, he does not deny that workers are being intimidated into attending then tries to justify this appalling act by stating that "some employers may feel so strongly about the issues that they are being quite forceful in encouraging their employees to attend".

How much force is acceptable to the Countryside Alliance? Second, he claims that the majority of the marchers will not be in chains. So how many will be and is this infringement of civil liberties acceptable to the Countryside Alliance?

What is clear is that the Countryside Alliance seeks to support the vested interests of the privileged few. Ian Cawsey MP, House of Commons.

If the members of the Countryside Alliance were genuinely concerned about rural employment, perhaps they could have bankrolled a rally through London about the 30,000 agricultural jobs lost since 1990. But they are not genuinely concerned about rural employment. Their concerns centre on blood sports and maintaining the feudal power of landowners and rural employers over the land and its workers.

The campaign for real rural life starts with decent public

transport, affordable housing, viable shops and services and a restructured Common Agricultural Policy that links subsidies with employment and the environment.

A free and democratic countryside needs transparency of land ownership to change a situation where 1 per cent of the population owns more than 60 per cent of the land. Why should information on which landowners received more than £1 billion a year in subsidies be shrouded in secrecy? Barry Leathwood, Transport and General Workers' Union.

ANDY Becker's article (Yeomen get marching orders, February 21) gave the

impression that people attending the Countryside March are being forced to attend and he generalises from a few extraordinary examples.

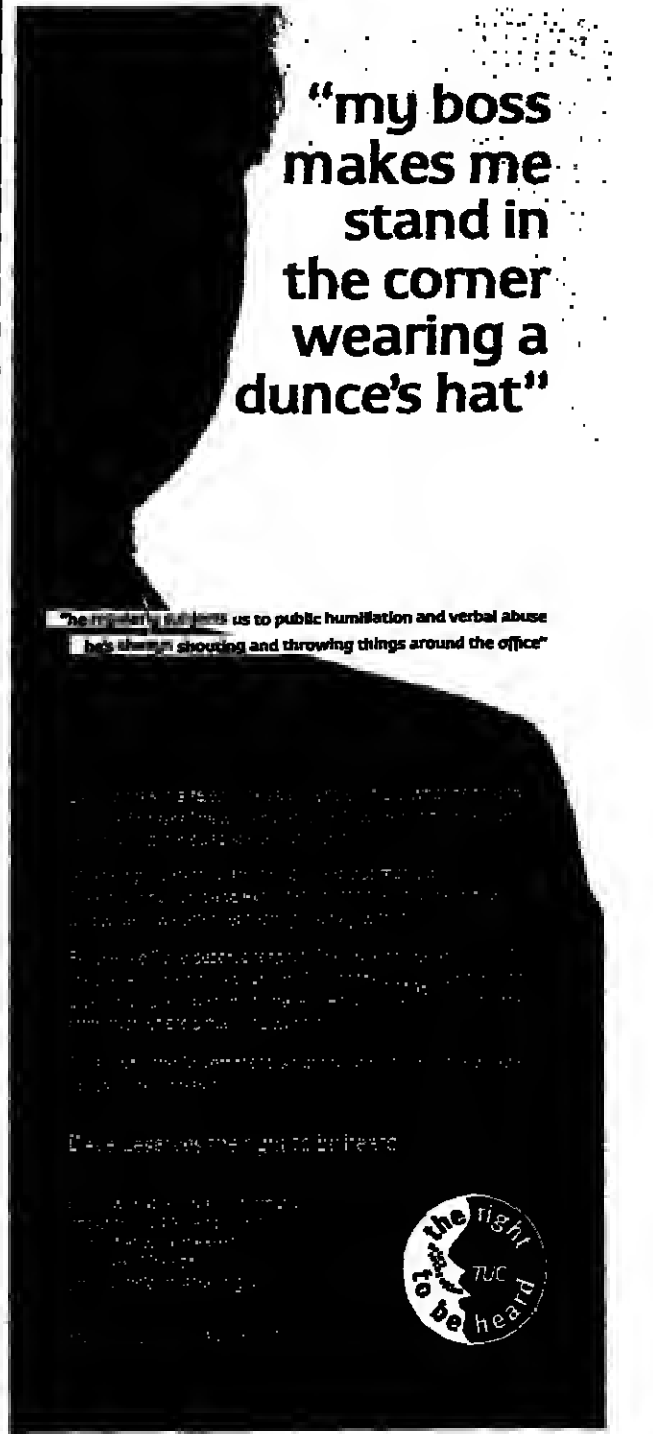
I AM a 32-year-old Labour supporter who has arranged a day's leave to attend the march. It will cost me over £35 to travel by train. I have to attend to goats, horses, hens and rabbits before leaving by 7.30am and again when I get back after 8pm.

Nobody is forcing or telling me to attend the march to defend the rights of minorities. JD Avon, Newton Abbot, Devon.

twice the size of Wales" says it all. What right has a small group of landowners to claim exclusive use of such a large area of countryside in a small island such as ours?

If the Government reneges on its right-to-roam promises then it is clearly putting the selfish interests of a minority before the needs and rights of the great majority of the population. John Turley, Wrexham.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters: shorter ones are more likely to appear. We regret we cannot acknowledge those not used.



Analysis Rural politics

These boots are made for walking

The Government has pledged to back the right-to-roam. But it is playing a dangerous game: trying to please its own supporters as well as pacify the powerful landowners' lobby.

By Peter Hetherington

DRESSED in anoraks and boots, the minister supposed to deliver one of the Labour Government's more radical pledges stuck his neck out this week. Beside the newly erected and brightly coloured "Private" signs surrounding 150 acres of Rammore Common, in Dorset — regarded by locals as open land for centuries, yet now out of bounds — Michael Meacher insisted that the Government was not backing down over a commitment to give ramblers a "right to roam" over almost four million acres of countryside.

The small gathering was called in protest at a High Court ruling last week that upheld a local landowner's decision to put barriers across eight footpaths on the cherished common. The ruling blew a hole through a long-held convention that people have a right to cross land which has been used by the public for more than 20 years.

The decision could have profound implications for 1.3 million acres of common land around the country. It graphically underlines the case of groups calling for tough measures to bring bullsharks to heel: namely that access to the countryside, far from improving, is increasingly being denied.

Meacher, a left-wing Environment Minister with a passion for honouring one of Labour's few pre-election commitments that carry no electoral tag, indicated that the Government would have to take on the powerful land-owning lobby with "right to roam" legislation. He suggested that the alternative, voluntary access agreements — the favoured approach of Downing Street — simply wouldn't work. "We were heartened by what he had to say," says David Beskin, assistant director of the Ramblers' Association. "He is clearly doing all in his power to push the case for legal measures when it is clear that No 10 is backtracking."

Since the creation of the Labour Party at the turn of the century few issues have aroused so much passion among members as access to the countryside. It strikes at the heart of an activist's ideology: the historical struggle of the working man and woman against the influence of the rich and powerful, who not only owned the land which should provide recreation but

A stroll in the country

There are about 120,000 miles of rights of way in England, and about 35,000 miles in Wales. They comprise footpaths, bridleways, byways open to all traffic and roads used as public paths. Local government is required to keep maps of rights of way, and to inform Ordnance Survey. The highway authority usually owns the path (but not the soil beneath) and must maintain the surface. It has a duty to signpost where a right of way leaves a metalled road.



The path user's responsibility
People using rights of way must keep dogs under "close control" and protect fauna and flora. It is an offence to leave litter. Local bye-laws may prevent dogs fouling.

Obstructions
Anything which impedes your passage may be deemed an obstruction, even an awkward gateway. This may amount to a legal nuisance. The landowner or farmer has a duty to prevent a crop (other than grass) blocking the path. The highway authority can prosecute the farmer or charge for remedial work.

Bulls in a field
No dairy bull over 10 months of age is allowed in a field through which a right of way passes. Other bulls are banned unless accompanied by cows or heifers. Landowners and farmers may be held responsible for injuries caused by other grazing animals if aware of a risk.

Public footpaths
There are about 80,000 miles of these highways in England. It is a civil wrong to cycle or ride a horse on a footpath; the landowner could sue you for trespass or nuisance. It is a criminal offence to drive a motor vehicle on a footpath. You have a right to pass and repass, and to take with you a "natural accompaniment", which includes a dog or pram.

Open country & common land
Common land occupies over 1.3 million acres, or 3.7% of the land area in England and Wales. It ranges from heath to moor and mountain. There is a public right of access to one-fifth of this. All common land is privately owned (by an individual, company or local authority) and "commons" have certain rights, including firewood collection. The public have access rights to all common land in urban areas; elsewhere commons have legal public access if special agreements or Acts have been made (eg for areas of Dartmoor and the Malvern Hills).
Large expanses of open and unutilised countryside, some owned by national and local governments, are free for walkers to wander upon and most are marked on Ordnance Survey maps. Entry points to some common land are not always shown on maps and so are difficult to find.
Other land with public access
Country parks, the Forestry Commission and the National Trust also provide public access to much of their land.

In Scotland the law is different. There is no requirement to log rights of way, and unused rights of way can be deleted if not used for 20 years. In England, the legal principle is "once a highway, always a highway".

Public byways open to all traffic
Right of way is by foot, horseback, bicycle or wheeled vehicles of all kinds. Vehicles must be taxed and insured and fit for use on a public highway. There are about 2,000 miles of byways in England.

Public bridleways
You have right of way by foot, on horse, donkey or mule, and on a bicycle (including mountain bikes). A cyclist must give way to other users. There are about 25,000 miles of bridleway in England.

Stiles
A new stile should only be put in place with the local authority's consent. Landowners must keep gates in good repair, or the authority can charge them for works.

also often ran the coal mines and factories which gave employment. It was no surprise in the 1930s when those workers and their families, backed by MPs such as Barbara Castle and immortalised by a string of folk songs, took to the hills of the Peak District and beyond in a series of "mass trespasses".

Almost as its last act, the post-war Labour government responded in 1949 with the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. This made the Peak District the country's first national park two years later, with 86 square miles of access land. Crucially, while the Act also legally underpinned around 140,000 miles of footpaths in England and Wales, it left one piece of unfinished business — namely the right to roam further across moorland, mountain, heath, downland, cliff and foreshore.

Instead, the then government decided that "voluntary access agreements" should be sought (the very measures apparently now being suggested by the doves at No 10), to avoid provoking hostility in the shires. "Ministers were persuaded that a blanket legal 'right to roam' in open country wasn't necessary," Alan Mattingley, director of the Ramblers' Association, recalled yesterday. "Instead, councils were told to use access order powers to deal with difficult cases — but, in fact, they proved to be little use at all. As we can see, the situation hasn't changed: there are still large areas of open country in England and Wales from which the public is excluded."

Labour in opposition promised to legislate to put

matters right. Just over two years ago, Frank Dobson, then Shadow Environment Secretary, told a Ramblers' Association rally: "On behalf of the Labour Party I make this promise... The next Labour government will make 'right to roam' a legal reality. We will change the law to give people that right."

Chris Smith, the current Heritage Secretary and former Shadow Environment Minister himself a keen hill walker, was equally unequivocal. "There is nothing more important than ensuring that everyone of all classes and incomes can get out in the open country without let or hindrance," he said a year earlier. "We shouldn't be at the beck and call of wealthy landowners like the Duke of Westminster."

Although slightly less specific, Labour's manifesto promised "greater freedom for people to explore our open countryside". But by last October, alarm bells started ringing in the Ramblers' Association when they heard that the landowners were lobbying hard in Downing Street. Ewen Cameron, then president of the Country Landowners' Association, had just written to Tony Blair calling on the

Government to "include the 'voluntary' management option" in a forthcoming consultation paper. Yesterday Mattingley said he received no reply. But the CLA's dire but unsubstantiated warnings that open access would leave the Government facing "£2 billion in compensation claims", plus threats of a legal challenge to Europe, apparently hit home. The CLA has fought hard to identify open access with "land nationalisation" — a description which invites an interesting interpretation for the 140,000 miles of footpaths in England and Wales.

THE consultation paper put out this week will duly set out the case for voluntary access agreements — with the possibility of legislation by the millennium once the House of Lords has been reformed, and hereditary peers, like the Duke of Westminster, can no longer sit.

Mattingley and the Ramblers, backed by scores of backbench Labour MPs — and, who knows, Michael Meacher himself — are in no doubt that the Government is getting cold feet. "They are

backsliding to some degree," says Mattingley diplomatically.

The reasons are not hard to find, according to amenity groups. They believe Downing Street is buckling under pressure from the powerful countryside lobby — landowners, farmers, fox-hunters and country-sports enthusiasts — who are staging another big rally in London this weekend. Backbench Labour MPs, like Paddy Tipping, who represents the rural Sherwood seat in Nottinghamshire, say this lobby has effectively "hijacked" the debate at the expense of ordinary country folk. Earlier this month, he was called to meet the Prime Minister along with two other Labour MPs, Andrew Bennett and Helen Jackson. "He wanted to reassure us, and told us not to believe everything we read in the papers," recalls Tipping. "He said a bit of tinkering was needed in the consultation paper, but stressed he was committed. After all, he backed my [private member's] bill on access three years ago."

Although the MPs were partly placated, Tipping now insists: "The landowners didn't deliver 50 years ago. They won't do it now. We want

access to these wilderness places for all the people — not just for the few."

Privately other MPs argue that right-to-roam legislation, far from being unpopular in the electoral battle ground of middle-England, will underpin support in the once "true blue" semi-rural seats now in Labour hands. They believe that the Government, trampling at the prospect of a revolt in the shires, is in danger of equating support for this weekend's sectional rally with opposition to greater access. "The landowners are hardly representative of middle-class opinion," says one MP. "It's about time we realised that the landowning class is totally unrepresentative of public opinion."

In short, they argue, the Government is in danger of lagging behind public opinion at a time when access — as last week's case in Dorset

illustrates — is increasingly being denied. Over the past few years, large tracts of land, once open to the public, have been fenced off as state undertakings, such as the Forestry Commission, sell large tracts and as former public utilities attempt to realise their huge landholding assets. In 1989, for instance, Yorkshire Water made 100,000 acres out of bounds so that grouse shooters, who pay thousands for the privilege, could have unfettered access.

For the time being, No 10 can probably placate backbenchers with the distant promise of legislation if, as expected, voluntary access agreements fail. But the troops are restless, and the activists angry at the prospect of landowners, the old enemy, calling the shots. Some even suggest that, if the landowners are yet again seen to be winning over the next year or so, the country might even witness another revolt by the access-to-the-countryside lobby.

Sources: Ramblers' Association; Open Spaces Society; Country Landowners' Association; Countryside Commission. An excellent website set up by the University of Plymouth explores

rights of way: <http://sh.plym.ac.uk/footpath/rms.htm>. Graphics sources: Ordnance Survey map © Crown Copyright 1998.

Graphics: Paddy Allen; Steve Millers; Research: Mark Espiner; Peter Hetherington, the Guardian's regional correspondent.

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Virgin £1 bn can't save jobs

Tilting train maker set to halve Birmingham assembly line

David Gow and Keith Harper

GEC Alsthom Metro-Cammell, the Anglo-French train-maker, is planning to halve the assembly-line workforce at its Birmingham plant despite winning the £1 billion bid to provide more than 40 "tilting" trains for Virgin Rail's west coast mainline service.

This is a new blow to Britain's once-flourishing train-manufacturing industry which has experienced a series of closures and a 20,000 reduction in employees in recent years.

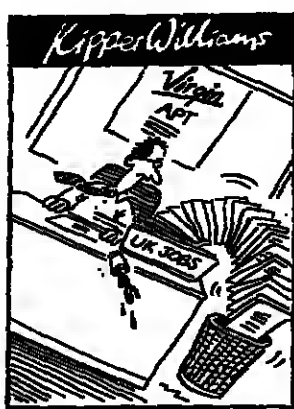
Plans to cut the workforce at Metro-Cammell's Washwood Heath plant from 800 to around 400 between August and November this year were contained in documents given to union officials at a recent

internal briefing by Mike Lloyd, managing director of GEC Alsthom's UK operations.

It came just two days after the Anglo-French consortium was unveiled as the preferred bidder, along with its partner, Italy's Fiat Ferroviaria, provider of the "tilt" technology, for the largest UK trains order this century.

The confidential plans have raised union fears that the bulk of work on the contract will go to plants elsewhere in Europe which are proving far more competitive than British rivals because of the combined strength of sterling.

Nervous officials at the Paris headquarters of GEC Alsthom, the joint venture between Britain's GEC and France's Alcatel, which owns Metro-Cammell, would merely say: "We have not announced any redundancies at



Metro-Cammell. They acknowledged, however, that the briefings had taken place.

Roger Lyons, general secretary of the MSF union, said the internal documents seen both by him and union officials in the west Midlands were of such concern that he has demanded an urgent meeting with Mr Lloyd to discuss the threat to jobs.

"It's quite absurd that, given this new £1 billion contract, the company should be defying the laws of industrial gravity and talking of job losses rather than securing jobs or increasing employment," he said last night.

Mr Lyons said his union suspected that the job losses could be linked to the proposed flotation, later this spring, of 33 per cent of the equity of GEC Alsthom in a move that should value the firm at £4.5 billion and net each parent £1 billion.

"It seems to me that this could be some kind of stock market presentation and the two events have collided, with the workforce as victims," he declared.

Black & Decker yesterday said it would create 350 jobs at its Spennymoor, Durham factory in an £18 million investment programme directly linked to last week's closure by the firm of Moiteno plant in Italy.

A German electronics firm, MSC Vertriebs, said it would create "up to 114 jobs" over the next five years at a new £5 million state-of-the-art factory at Livingston, west Lothian.

Pay up or we don't buy rolling stock, taxpayer told

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

TWO privatised rail companies warned yesterday that they will not be able to buy new trains to combat overcrowding without extra cash from the Government or an extension to their franchises.

Regional Railways North East said passenger figures had exceeded expectations but it needed more money from the Government to buy the new trains it needs.

Its subsidy of £225 million is reduced to £197 million next year, and it has asked the rail franchise director, John O'Brien, for further help.

A spokesman for RRTS said passenger traffic last

year went up by 10 per cent and was expected to rise by at least 5 per cent this year. The company was investing in new trains but could not cope with overcrowding without more rolling stock.

Great North Eastern Railway, which operates the London to Scotland east coast route, said its franchise would not support new trains unless its seven-year franchise was extended. It wanted to order 15 tilting trains but could only justify two because they would not be ready until two years before the franchise expired.

Keith Hill, national secretary of the pressure group Save Our Railways, said: "GNER knew the length of their franchise when they started. If they are not prepared to spend the money for their passengers' sake, they ought to have the franchise taken away from them."

GNER has offered the Government a profit-sharing deal if its franchise is extended.

Notebook

Size not sighs for exposed bank



Edited by Alex Brummer

AT first blush, the financial results from HSBC — owners of the Hong Kong Bank and Midland — do not justify the big downgrading on the stock market that occurred as a result of the Asian crisis. As the company says, its exposure in the crisis countries that have called in the International Monetary Fund represents less than 2 per cent of assets, which is considerably less than Germany's Deutsche Bank, which has been forced into enormous provisions.

As a precaution, HSBC has upped its bad and doubtful debt charge to £615 million and raised its general provisions too against the Asian exposure. But in the context of a group generating profits before tax of £4.97 billion, this is hardly going to have depositors queuing up at their hole in the wall to withdraw funds.

The contrary is the case. Amid the turmoil all around it in the Pacific region, the sheer size and spread of HSBC will provide a comfort zone for both commercial and personal depositors. In a flight to quality, HSBC — regulated as it is from London — commands safe-haven status. This is not to say that size makes it problem-proof. As chairman Sir William Purves notes, in his final report to shareholders, the combination of weak exchange rates, significantly lower stock exchange levels and high interest rates in many countries has led to "a deterioration in credit quality" — the full impact of which is only beginning to emerge. Which suggests that Sir William, who saw the bank through its previous traumas in the North American real estate market, continues to be cautious.

In fact it is precisely businesses which used to be problematic that have now come surging to the rescue. Under Keith Whitson, who takes over as chief executive of the whole group after the annual meeting departs, Midland has been restored to something like its former glory with profits of £1.1 billion, up 24 per cent on the previous year. Similarly, on a smaller scale, the North American operations (the former Marine Midland) also have been prospering.

At Midland the highlights include a lift in commercial banking results to £1 billion, almost doubled profits on overseas operations and for the first time a profit in excess of £10 million from First Direct, the pioneer in the UK's fast-expanding telephone banking market. There is still room at Midland to reduce its cost-income ratio at 67.5 per cent, although the figure was inflated in 1997 by heavy marketing. As has been the case with

other UK investment banks in 1997, HSBC saw a sharp deterioration in performance but that also is not unexpected given the regions in which it operates.

It is to HSBC's credit that where other UK-based banks have not dared tread, such as Latin America, it expanded in 1997 maintaining its global ambitions.

The great uncertainty over the current year is the degree of containment in Asia. Were, for instance, the US-dollar link in Hong Kong to come under pressure, knocking back asset values in the region even further, HSBC would have to dig deeper. However, its shock absorbers are better than most.

Global skies

WHILE anti-trust authorities in Washington and Brussels have been wrestling with the potential challenge to competition in the skies posed by the link-up between the world's two most powerful air carriers — British Airways and American Airlines — the partners have also been looking Pacific-wards. BA already has a stake in the Pacific through Qantas and now American Airlines' shrewd boss Robert Crandall has carved out his own deal.

He has taken advantage of the new more-open skies agreement between the US and Japan to conclude a code-sharing deal with JAL, Japan's largest airline. Under code-sharing arrangements JAL will gain immediate access to US cities served by AA — which is most of them — and similar rights will be obtained by AA in Japan. A passenger catching a flight in Osaka could, potentially, fly to Portland via London using JAL, AA and eventually BA flights without having to revalidate at any point.

The big losers from the JAL code-sharing deal will be Northwest Airlines and United Airlines, the two American carriers which have broad access to the Japanese market. They will now effectively find themselves competing with AA and even, possibly, BA on route structures they have made their own.

There will, of course, be objections to American Airlines abusing its powerful market share. But if, as a result, JAL is forced to become more competitive in price and service terms as a result of access to a much wider global network, then the real winners should be the travellers and shippers.

Merck march

AS Glaxo Wellcome/SmithKline Beecham forge their £100 billion merger, their closest rival, Merck, has stolen a march in the asthma market with an FDA approval of its new drug, Singulair, which is seen as revolutionising asthma care, is one of those rare creatures of which ethical drug companies dream — a £1 billion-a-year product which will put pressure on all its leading rivals.

HSBC shrugs off malaise in Asian markets

Lisa Buckingham
City Editor

FEARS that economic turmoil in Asia would force a dramatic increase in bad debt provisions were swept aside yesterday by HSBC, which reported record profits and set aside only a modest amount more for loans which might turn sour.

The bank, which reported profits up 10 per cent to £4.97 billion, said it was adding £175 million to its provisions for bad loans.

The chairman, Sir William Purves, admitted that "turbulent conditions" in Asia had dominated recent trading and meant a deterioration in credit quality. Only 2 per cent of the bank's £286 billion of assets are exposed to the most badly affected economies — Korea, Indonesia and Thailand. And in the latter two countries the bank had actually picked up business because of a "flight to quality".

HSBC said it was topping up its bad-debt provision by £175 million as a precaution. The chief executive, John Bond, said it was impossible to predict whether this would have to be increased or reduced as the Asian economic drama unfolded.

More details of the picture in the Far East will emerge tomorrow with profit figures

from international banking group Standard Chartered, which yesterday denied being in takeover or merger talks.

The statement followed reports that Barclays had made overtures to Standard and was preparing for a possible hostile bid, probably worth about £10 billion. Barclays, which has appointed Sir Andrew Large as deputy chairman designate, issued a cautious statement appearing to reserve its position. The bank said it would continue to "monitor developments among its competitors throughout the financial services sector".

The bank had earlier been linked with NatWest but political obstacles are thought to have frustrated its ambitions coupled with an overt threat from Lloyds TSB, its much larger rival, to intervene and thwart the match.

Shares in Standard Chartered — which 12 years ago shook off the predatory attentions of Lloyds — sank 22½p to 746½p while Barclays was up 1p to 1852p. HSBC gained 3p to 1781p on its profit growth.

The appointment of Sir Andrew, former chairman of the Securities and Investments Board, provides a replacement for Sir Peter Middleton who retired as deputy chairman in May. Although he will stay on as a non-executive director.

Bid approach heralds cable regrouping

Chris Barrie and Simon Beavis

THE cable television and phone industry was preparing for a new round of consolidation last night after General Cable, whose most important franchise is in Birmingham, announced it had received an informal takeover proposal.

In a short, but carefully worded statement to the Stock Exchange the company said that during discussions with other firms, directors had received "indications" that the talks could lead to an offer being made for General Cable.

There was immediate speculation that Telewest, the second biggest cable company after Cable & Wireless Communications, was the potential bidder. However, General Cable has also been in contact with NTL and Comcast, the two groups in the throes of merging British operations.

Speculation about General Cable's future had already begun circling the market and pushed up its shares by nearly 8 per cent to 117.5p.

The cable industry has already gone through one round of significant reshaping following the absorption by Cable & Wireless of three rival cable TV companies to form CWC. That corporate move left the other players

looking too small to compete alone and desperate to tidy up a maze of small franchises and cross-shareholdings.

Since then NTL and Comcast have announced that they intend to get together and there has been speculation that US West could take control of Telewest.

General Cable is attractive because it holds a 45 per cent stake in Birmingham Cable which is among the country's most successful cable franchises. Telewest and Comcast each own 27.5 per cent.

One observer noted that if Telewest, which has first call on Comcast's Birmingham stake, won control of the franchise it would seriously displace the new NTL alliance.

Meanwhile, Channel 4 agreed its new licence yesterday with the Independent Television Commission but at the cost of a much more rigorous commitment to multi-cultural programming and to broadcasting original material produced outside London.

In a move welcomed by the ITV companies, the ITC has insisted that Channel 4 devote extra programming resources to experimental productions and to education and services for the disabled.

The company will have to guarantee at least three hours of multi-cultural broadcasting a week, although not all of it will be in peak times as campaigners have urged.

Swan takes flight



ADAM COOPER soars to fame as the Swan in Swan Lake, with an all-male corps de ballet. The international success of this ballet transformed Adventures in Motion Pictures, the production company, from a fledgling business funded by the Arts Council into a multi-million-pound group of companies, writes Tony May.

Now the group is raising £500,000 through the issue of 1,000 founder shares of £500 each and claims investors could get their money back in two years as they share in the dividend from all five performances. The next two years will see more than 171 weeks of performances of Swan Lake and Cinderella, AMP's new hit, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Like the "angels" who have financed AMP's West End productions, founder shareholders risk losing their money. But they will enjoy benefits such as invitations to first nights, company parties and special events.

PHOTOGRAPH: HUGO GLENDINING

£250m advances print ambitions

Tony May

WATMOUGHS — which prints for five of Britain's national newspaper groups — yesterday accepted a £250 million cash takeover offer from Investcorp, a US investment bank that has ambitions to create the biggest printing company in Europe.

The bid, made through Webinvest, eclipses the £188 million hostile bid from Walmouth's Canadian rival, Quebecor Printing.

Webinvest, which is backed by funds from Middle Eastern investors, plans to pay even more for the privately owned British Printing Company and said the two businesses would be complementary, with the potential to be a "European champion".

That would create a group ranking just outside the top five European gravure printers. Gravure technology involves printing pages from a revolving engraved cylinder rather than from plates.

Webinvest's plan is for Tony Rudston, BPC's chief executive, to become chief executive of the merged entity. "We believe that the combination of the British Printing Company and Watmoughs make sound industrial logic, enabling us to make this attractive offer to Watmoughs' shareholders," said Richard Warner, a director of Webinvest.

Watmoughs has a strong position in the consumer magazine market, printing titles such as Hello, Cosmopolitan and Sainsbury's Magazine as well as supplements for the Guardian, Telegraph

and News International press empires.

With new printing plant costing about £30 million, winners in the industry need deep pockets to fend off competition in an increasingly international industry. The new combine would have annual profits of more than £50 million on sales of £550 million.

Figures tell tale of two sectors

Mark Atkinson

FALLING exports slowed economic growth to its lowest rate for almost three years in the final quarter of 1997 but consumer spending accelerated, according to figures released yesterday.

Revised official figures showed that GDP expanded by 0.4 per cent in the final three months of last year compared with the previous period, the slowest pace since the second quarter of 1996.

Year-on-year the performance was more impressive, with growth up by 3 per cent.

But both figures released by the Office for National Statistics were lower than the original estimates of 0.5 per cent and 3.1 per cent.

The main reason for the downward revision was a contraction in manufacturing output, largely reflecting a sharp fall in exports.

This was more than offset by consumer spending, however, which expanded by 1.3 per cent in quarterly terms and 4.5 per cent annually — the strongest rate of growth since the second quarter of 1995.

City analysts said the divergence left the Bank of England still facing a dilemma about interest rates. Although manufacturing is on the brink of recession due to the strength of the pound, pointing to the need for lower rates, consumer spending and robust wage growth threaten the Government's 2.5 per cent inflation target.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.389	France 9.71	Italy 2.883	Singapore 2.96
Austria 20.43	Germany 2.90	Japan 1.03	South Africa 1.30
Belgium 29.85	Greece 492.21	Netherlands 3.26	Spain 24.50
Canada 2.27	Hong Kong 12.32	New Zealand 2.76	Sweden 12.58
Cyprus 0.65	India 51.89	Norway 12.16	Switzerland 2.34
Denmark 11.13	Ireland 1.862	Portugal 227.18	Turkey 258.500
Finland 6.89	Israel 5.90	USA 1.00	

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

14 SPORTS NEWS

Football

Spurs land Saib as Arsenal offer £5m for Pires

Martin Thorpe

BELEAGUED Tottenham Hotspur yesterday completed the signing of Algeria's captain Moustapha Saib from Valencia in a desperate attempt to beef up their midfield and avoid the ignominy of relegation.

Their north London rivals Arsenal have, meanwhile, made an offer for Robert Pires of Metz, a forward rated at £5 million.

Saib, signed for £2.3 million, is expected to make his debut for Spurs when Bolton Wanderers, the team immediately below them in the Premiership, visit White Hart Lane on Sunday.

Saib first held talks with Tottenham in January but the club's head coach Christian Gross decided not to sign the midfielder until his participation in the African Nations Cup was over.

Gross was first impressed by Saib when he played for Auxerre against his former club Grasshopper in last season's Champions League.

The Spurs director of football David Platt had also shown an interest in Saib when he was manager of Sheffield Wednesday, describing

him as "a terrific grafting player with good skills".

Saib joined Valencia at the start of the season from Auxerre, where he played 33 league games and scored eight goals last season, but soon fell out with the Spanish club's coach Claudio Ranieri and has hardly figured since.

Arsenal, who had also shown an interest in the Algerian, want Pires to give them extra attacking options next season. The 25-year-old French international is thinking over a summer move to Highbury and has promised a decision by April. "I've had a genuine offer from Arsenal although other clubs are interested in him as well," he said. "It is extremely tempting and flattering."

The other interested parties include Juventus, Barcelona, Milan and Marseille. Newcastle have also been linked with the player.

Arsenal have a head start on the rest because Patrick Vieira is on the Highbury staff. "I often discuss going to play abroad when I meet Patrick on international get-togethers," he said. "From his description, Arsenal sounds like paradise. What impresses me most is the club set-up and the commitment of the fans, which is something we lack

in France. Also players in England enjoy a more freedom on the pitch."

In the more immediate future Arsenal face an FA Cup fifth-round replay at Crystal Palace tomorrow still with big injury problems.

David Seaman, Steve Boulton, Ray Parlour and Ian Wright are all long-term casualties while Emmanuel Petit and Nigel Winterburn, who both missed Saturday's 1-0 win over Palace in the league, are doubtful.

That game swelled the injury list further, with David Platt, Nicolas Anelka and Gilles Grimandi, the scorer of the winner, also doubtful.

A winger, welcomed back Tony Adams from suspension and hopes to have Dennis Bergkamp back after a bout of flu. Marc Overmars is still on international duty.

Palace, who know by today whether the millionaire supporter Mark Goldberg has been successful with his £27 million takeover bid.

Goldberg says that when he met the Palace chairman Ron Noakes on Friday, "I was able to prove to him that the necessary funding is available for the takeover to proceed. We will meet again today when we hope to push the deal through."



Please appease me... Chris Silverwood, six overs for 22 runs, makes an unsuccessful appeal for leg-before against Clayton Lambert LAURENCE GRIFFITHS

Tour match: Guyana v England XI

Croft and Tufnell turn the screw

Mike Selvey in Georgetown sees the two England spinners finish with honours even

FIVE wickets apiece for Phil Tufnell and Robert Croft put England in sight of an improbable victory at the Everest Ground yesterday. Tufnell took five for 42 and Croft five for 51 as Guyana, 71 for six wickets, collapsed to 139 all out.

It left England 15 overs to score 77 to win, but after losing three wickets, they gave up the chase and settled for a draw.

The key wicket had been that of Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who, seeing his side pinned down, counter-attacked, often from yards down the pitch, and made 34 before edging Tufnell to slip.

This was a pitch that bad

not so much turned for the spinners as revolved like a Black & Decker, and England would always have nursed hopes of the spinners placing Guyana under the sort of pressure in their second innings that had brought Croft six wickets in the first.

But for a while it looked to be misplaced optimism as the game seemed to be sliding towards an inevitable draw. Clayton Lambert, the pacy 36-year-old left-hander with a Peter Willey stance and renewed Test ambitions beyond his abilities, made 55.

He shared the first-wicket stand with Nicholas de Groot, who sounds as if he should be diamond-dealing in Hatten

Garden rather than opening the batting for Guyana, and the game was moribund.

Persistence brought its rewards, however, and the game sprung to life as the ball hit and snapped at the batsman and the Guyanese innings collapsed. Five wickets fell, 10 overs to Croft and Tufnell, at a cost of 15 runs, and on 86 for five, with a lead of only 31 and a session still to go, a result looked a possibility.

It was not so much the transformation that was surprising as the fact that Lambert and De Groot were able to survive so well in conditions that saw Croft floating his off-breaks into the breeze as early as the fourth over.

The dismissal of De Groot for 35 started the slide. In Tufnell's following over Lambert, typically vigorous against the

seamers but beaten time and again as Croft ripped the ball away from him, was caught at backward short leg as the ball turned sharply into him.

Neither Keith Semple nor the West Indies A and Under-19 batsman Ramnareesh Sarwan was able to survive for long, with Semple caught off bat and pad at short leg off Croft and Sarwan driving the same bowler to mid-on, where Alec Stewart was substituting for John Crawley, who was suffering with sinusitis.

When, in the next over, Travis Dowlin was hit on the back leg by Tufnell and much to his surprise was given out leg-before, England could smell victory. Wickets for both spinners after the interval kept the chances alive, although time was running out.

Earlier, England, 200 for six overnight, lost their final four

wickets for the addition of 39, giving them a first-innings lead of 55. Mark Ramprakash, who had batted faultlessly on Sunday afternoon for 68, hit one thunderous pull off Colin Stuart before chasing a wide ball from the same bowler to be caught at the wicket for 77 after five hours batting.

The remainder of the innings, including the wicket of Croft for 35, went in three successive overs from the left-arm spinner Neil McGarrell, who finished with seven for 71, the best of his career.

● The truth about Brian Lara's barbie: that England's schoolboy error.

www.westindies98.co.uk

Kinkladze faces deadline

Ian Ross

GEORGI KINKLADZE's future will almost certainly be decided in the next few days.

A move from Manchester City would necessitate a renewal of the Georgian international's work permit, which could take four weeks. In effect he has his own transfer deadline, a month before the official domestic guillotine on March 26, if he is not to sit out the last six weeks of the season with a new club.

City's new manager Joe Royle, though admiring Kinkladze's abilities, has all but accepted that he must dispense with them in order to fund investments designed to stave off relegation; and, if he must, now is the time. He has expressed interest in a package with Everton that would see Dave Watson and Claus Thomsen swap Merseyside for Manchester.

Everton's former England international Full-back Earl Barrett is likely to join Sheffield Wednesday today on a free transfer. Wednesday want Barrett as a stop-gap replacement for Ian Nolan, who suffered a double fracture of his right leg on Saturday.

Chris Fairclough is expected to move from Bolton Wanderers to Sheffield United for a nominal fee this morning. Ian Rush, 36, joined the Sheffield club yesterday on a month's loan from Newcastle.

The Manchester United

striker Jordi Cruyff is expected to stay for around four weeks after suffering a hairline fracture to his right fibula on Saturday. United's Mark Wilson, a 20-year-old midfielder, has signed for Wrexham on a month's loan.

The 19-year-old right-midfielder Enzo Scifo said yesterday he would not play international soccer again after being left out of Belgium's squad for tomorrow's friendly against the United States. Scifo, who has 79 caps, accused the coach Georges Leekens of "a lack of respect". Leekens says: "If Scifo cannot accept that we experiment, that's his problem."

South Africa's bid for the World Cup in 2006 was confirmed yesterday.

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The Manchester United

Clydebank may go to law over Dublin move

CLYDEBANK underlined the seriousness of their intention to move to Dublin when they declared yesterday that they would mount a legal challenge if their proposal was rejected by the Scottish League or the Scottish Football Association.

"We would have to talk to our legal people if hurdles were put in our way," Colin McCarthy, a director of the Second Division club, said in Dublin. "The long-term aim would be to have the team playing in Dublin once a fortnight. Hopefully in a few years' time we would win promotion to the new Scottish Premier Division."

Clydebank informed the SFL yesterday that they have

reached an agreement with the Royal Dublin Society to rent the showground at Ballsbridge. Subject to permission from the club, who intend to retain their name, would move their existing playing squad and management team to the 12,000-capacity arena.

At a simultaneous news conference at a rugby club in Glasgow the Clydebank chairman Sandy Moffat said: "The decision of the board follows a report from consultants appointed after the takeover of the club. Following the disposal of Kildow stadium by the previous board, a return to a new stadium in Clydebank cannot be undertaken on financial grounds. Dublin is the only way forward."

"There are precedents. Derry City, located in Northern Ireland, play in the Republic's national league. Cardiff City play in the English League while Monaco play in the French League."

David Low, management consultant behind the project, said: "We have done a lot of research into the numbers of Dublin-based football fans who travel to England and Scotland every weekend because of the lack of professional sport at home."

The Football Association of Ireland is one of several bodies opposed to the plan, which will be discussed at the next Scottish League management committee meeting on March 5.

Test player killed at short leg

RAMAN LAMBA, a 38-year-old batsman who played in four Tests for India, died in Dhaka yesterday of a brain haemorrhage after receiving severe head injuries when struck by a ball during a Division match against Bangladesh in the Bangladesh Premier League.

The incident happened when Lamba, who played for the Bangladesh side Abahani Krira Chakra, was fielding at short leg without a helmet in the Premier Division match against Mohammedan Sporting Club.

He was taken to the intensive care unit of Dhaka's Institute of Post Graduate Medicine and Research

where he lay in a coma before being declared clinically dead by doctors yesterday morning.

Hampshire have boosted their attack for the new season by signing the Australian Test fast bowler Michael Kasprowicz as their overseas player.

The 26-year-old, who replaces his Queensland team-mate Matthew Hayden, took 60 wickets when he played for Essex in 1994 and a Sheffield Shield record of 64 in 1995-96.

Kasprowicz's Australian team-mate Steve Waugh is to play for Ireland this summer — and will face his

country's A team in six one-day matches during August.

Australia's vice-captain is visiting Ireland as part of the International Cricket Council's development programme and will follow in the footsteps of South African skipper Hansie Cronje, who was there last season.

England's management yesterday finally ruled Darren Gough out of the West Indian tour. It decided that the Yorkshire bowler, who had hoped to play in the one-day internationals, should not risk his recovery from the hamstring injury that has kept him out of the Test series.



Lamba... hit while fielding

Pools Forecast

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP	
1 Aston Villa	2 Liverpool
3 Manchester United	4 Blackburn
5 Arsenal	6 Leicester
7 Chelsea	8 Everton
9 Tottenham	10 Newcastle
11 Sheffield Wednesday	12 Southampton

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE

FIRST DIVISION	
1 Bury	2 Swindon
3 Charlton	4 Walsley
5 Oxford	6 Walsley
7 Millwall	8 Walsley
9 Walsley	10 Walsley
11 Walsley	12 Walsley
13 Walsley	14 Walsley
15 Walsley	16 Walsley
17 Walsley	18 Walsley

SECOND DIVISION

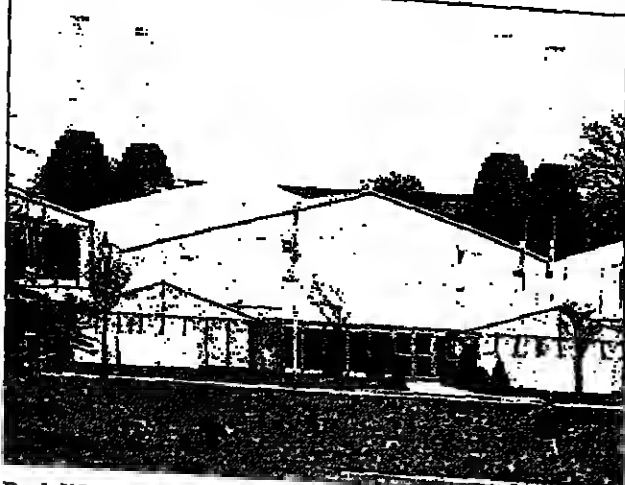
1 Blackpool	2 Fulham	3 Plymouth	4 Walsley
5 Walsley	6 Walsley	7 Walsley	8 Walsley
9 Walsley	10 Walsley	11 Walsley	12 Walsley
13 Walsley	14 Walsley	15 Walsley	16 Walsley
17 Walsley	18 Walsley	19 Walsley	20 Walsley

Results

Football	
SCOTTISH LEAGUE	
1 Dundee	2 Dundee
3 Dundee	4 Dundee
5 Dundee	6 Dundee
7 Dundee	8 Dundee
9 Dundee	10 Dundee

Tennis

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Park life... the new ATP Tour event leased from Milan gets underway in the shadow of the former power station yesterday. Tim Henman, beaten in the first round of his last four tournaments, opens tonight

Chill wind takes heat off British boom in Battersea

Stephen Bierley finds Rusedski firing as Henman aims to stop the rot this week

GREG RUSEDSKI is ranked No. 5 in the world and a brand new ATP Tour tournament, the Guardian Direct Cup, opened in London's Battersea Park yesterday, with nine of the top 20 men taking part. The crocuses are blooming and British tennis is booming.

The one chill wind blowing through the temporary but impressive complex, with its two courts and seating for 5,000, concerned Tim Henman who, after losing in the first round of his last four tournaments, has slipped to No. 21, the first time he has been out of the top 20 since October.

Tonight Henman plays Richard Krajicek whom he beat 7-6, 6-7, 7-5, 6-4 in the fourth round of Wimbledon last year, thus depriving the Dutchman of his crown. What Henman would give for another victory now, but Krajicek, ranked No. 10, is in good early-season form having recently won the St Petersburg Open.

Krajicek, noticeably slimmer than last year, lost to Rusedski in the quarter-finals of the US Open and believes the time is right for a little revenge over a Briton.

Tony Pickard, Rusedski's coach, issued a plea for patience yesterday. "Criticism

of Tim and his coach David Felgate at this stage would be foolhardy and destructive.

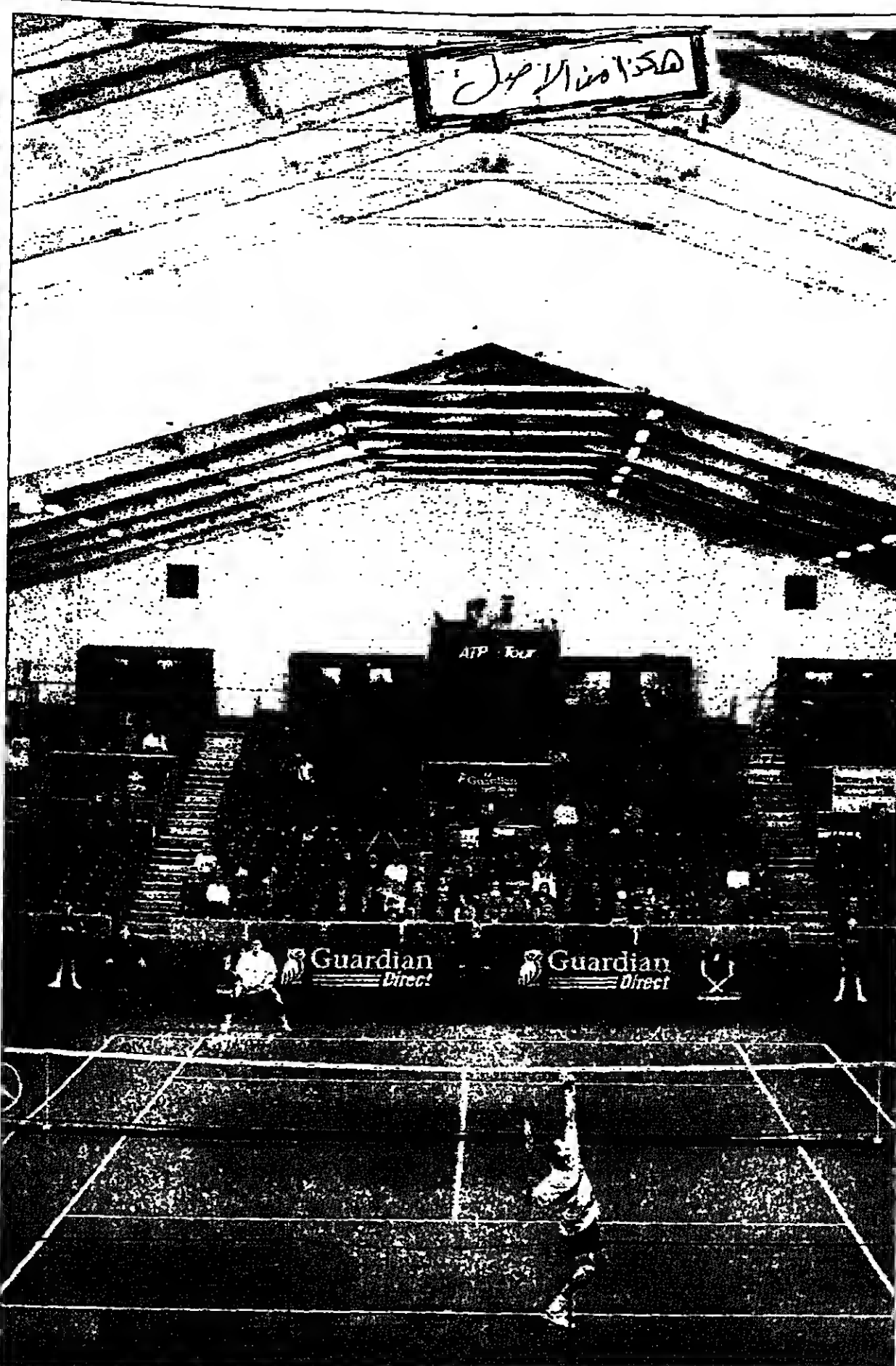
"There is always a way out of such situations and one or other of them will cough it out," said Pickard. "They are going through the horrors, which can happen in any sport. They are also getting a lot of mixed opinions from people who do not know the current circumstances."

Rusedski and Pickard arrived back from Antwerp on Sunday night, where the British No. 1 won the European Community Championship, defeating Switzerland's Marc Rosset, a victory that saw him jump the four places from world No. 9. At the crack of dawn this morning Rusedski will get his first chance to practise on the carpeted Battersea courts.

"They look pretty quick to me," said Pickard, a view reiterated by Krajicek. They will be a sharp change from the slow indoor court in Belgium. Rusedski's opening match is tomorrow evening against Germany's Marc-Kevin Goellner, over whom he holds a 1-0 career record.

Pickard is delighted with the way Rusedski has snapped back into top form after his disappointing third-round defeat against Todd Woodbridge in the Australian Open.

"Craig has improved his consistency beyond anybody's wildest dreams, and his mental approach is a good 50 per cent better," said Pickard, who took over from Brian Teacher as Rusedski's coach after last year's US



Open final. "And he's never been fitter."

Pickard deliberately chose not to accompany Rusedski to Split, his first tournament after Melbourne, when the British No. 1 reached the final before losing to the local hero Goran Ivanisevic.

"I wanted Greg to work things out for himself," said Pickard, who had been concerned that Rusedski had seized up against Woodbridge. It was not something he wanted to talk about specifically, but Pickard believes Rusedski has overcome the problem.

"The luxury with Greg is that he listens and then acts on advice. It's getting more exciting all the time," Pickard added. "It's not a question of working on one specific thing. The aim is to concentrate on all the best qualities of Greg's game and make them better."

Martin Lee, Britain's former world junior No. 1, was beaten 6-4, 7-6 in the first

round by Bohdan Ulihrach, the Czech ranked No. 31 in the world.

Lee received a wild card for this event, but found the gulf between the lesser Satellite and Challenger events a tough one to bridge. "But I learned so much from the match, both mentally and physically," said the 20-year-old. "It really only came down to a couple of points."

The first seed to fall was Sergi Bruguera, the former French Open champion, who

lost 6-1, 7-6 to Jan Siemerink of the Netherlands. Bruguera, seeded No. 8, has now won only one match this year, which puts Henman's troubles into perspective.

Andrew Richardson, the British No. 3, has risen from No. 146 in the world to 145 and Chris Wilkinson has dropped from 179 to 181. But the British No. 4 will have risen in next week's list after the points he gained for qualifying for Battersea are added to his total.

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Andrew Richardson, the British No. 3, has risen from No. 146 in the world to 145 and Chris Wilkinson has dropped from 179 to 181. But the British No. 4 will have risen in next week's list after the points he gained for qualifying for Battersea are added to his total.

The South African centre Brendan Venner made his debut for us and despite a very uncharacteristic mistake

News from the front

Gary Halpin

A bouquet for the new Best man

TEN days ago, we all

sat in the players' pavilion at Leicester joking that Chelsea had set a precedent in terms of managerial musical chairs. Bob Dwyer's departure from Leicester was already imminent, but none of us guessed our own coach Willie Anderson would suffer a similar Ruin exit inside the week.

With London Irish entrenched at the bottom of the Premiership, Anderson was as aware of the pressure as anyone. What surprised us most was the speed at which he was replaced as director of rugby by Dick Best. It literally was a case of here today and gone tomorrow.

From a playing viewpoint, such decisions are better made directly and quickly. Our feelings are irrelevant.

A rugby player's job is to play rugby and not get bogged down in club politics. The difference nowadays, thank God, is that it no longer takes endless committee meetings and back-room meanderings to arrive at such a decision.

I and many others have wanted professionalism in the sport for many years; now that it's arrived, we must accept that part of being a professional is accepting decisions you may not agree with. Best's position will be reassessed after the season, although it is fair to point out that he starts the job with his club occupying a more precarious position than Glanville Vail's. At least the prospect of no automatic relegation this season gives him, and us, something to cling to.

I know from playing Quins that Best is an excellent coach who gets results come hell or high water. Three seasons ago, he was involved in a successful relegation battle when Quins just stayed up ahead of Northampton, so in terms of relevant experience a better choice could not have been made. He could not have had a better start than the 38-20 victory over our fellow strugglers Bristol on Friday night, although he graciously and rightly attributed the win to the efforts of his predecessor.

The South African centre Brendan Venner made his debut for us and despite a very uncharacteristic mistake early in the game brought much-needed stability to our backline. Venner, a doctor from Bloemfontein, has played Super 12 rugby for Free State, not to mention his appearance as a Springbok replacement in the 1995 World Cup final. His chirpy and upbeat personality (very unusual for a Free Stater) has been most welcome in difficult times at Sunbury as the club approaches its centenary season in 1998-99.

You could say that Celtic rugby is feeling the pinch, too. The weekend demolition of Wales and Scotland has left a feeling that an unbridgeable gap may be developing in European rugby. With so few players to choose from, it is difficult to see how Ireland, Scotland and Wales can survive in this era.

Although it is still premature to make such judgments, England and France are certainly looking good for the World Cup next season. I do not think, as some commentators suggested, that England's performance sent shockwaves around the rugby world but it did raise a few eyebrows; the gap between them and the southern hemisphere may be closing. The English and French have the resources to win the World Cup but, as yet, they are not mentally ready.

England must be as annoyed as I am to see poor young Phil Vickery being cited and banned for punching in the Welsh game. If the ref had seen it, Vickery would probably have been warned and penalised. The punch did not seem to make clear contact and although there was probable intent, no damage was done. In the Irish squad, we used to call blows that never landed "Franno punches" after the second-row Neil Francis, who boxed like a girl. I felt it would have been fairer just to fine Vickery for his "Franno punch".

It's cup fever time again when we entertain Wasps in the Telford's Bitter Cup quarter-final on Friday night. We will fancy our chances of advancing to the semi-final and I predict a game of titanic proportions. Could it be we're in for a Middlesex-type finale (minus the relegation aspect) to our season?

Rugby League

Gregory 'happy' at Salford

Andy Wilson

ANDY GREGORY yesterday pronounced himself "happier than ever" amid speculation that he was considering quitting as coach of Salford.

"There is no way I am planning on walking out on Salford," said Gregory. "I would be mad to even consider such action, and I'm amazed where these stories have originated. I'm just looking forward to our season on Sunday."

Although the weekend's events did not prompt Salford's board meeting last night, they would certainly have figured on the agenda. Gregory has worked without a contract at the Willows since he was recruited as player-coach by the chairman John Wilkinson in 1995. He has done a fine job, and a number of close-season sign-

ings have led the club to believe they can improve on last year, when they finished sixth in the Super League and reached the semi-finals of the Challenge Cup.

One item officially up for discussion at last night's meeting was Gregory's interest in Mike Peckey, the powerfully built Australian centre who left Widnes to play rugby union with Bedford last year, but has now become the latest former league player keen to return to his original code.

Peckey, who also claims to have been approached by Warrington and Halifax, said: "I have enjoyed playing union, but league is still the game for me. Bedford are cutting players left, right and centre to reduce the wage bill."

Graeme Bradley, the newly appointed captain of the Bradford Bulls, has landed in trouble with the Rugby Football League for criticising referees

after his first match in charge. He referred to a "schoolteacher mentality" in his column in a local newspaper after the Bulls' Challenge Cup victory at Rochdale last week, and his comments will be discussed today by the RFL's operational board.

The RFL has also been asked by the London Broncos to register their latest Australian signing, the former Oldham utility player Luke Goodwin, in time for Sunday's fifth-round tie against Halifax at the Stoop.

Halifax, whose Super League fixture against Sheffield Eagles in July will be played at Northampton Town's Sixfields Stadium, are still hoping to have John Bentley in their team.

The Lions winger has recently moved from Newcastle to Rotherham rugby union club but remains contracted to the Blue Sox.

Boxing

Eubank comes out strutting

John Hawling

NEVER one to fight shy of the outrageous, Chris Eubank will step up two weight divisions to challenge Carl Thompson for the World Boxing Organisation version of the cruiserweight title in Manchester on April 18.

Eubank admitted the contest, which is the principle support for Naseem Hamed's 10th defence of his WBO featherweight title, was "a big gamble, but worth taking".

Frank Warren is still unable to name an opponent for Hamed, so Eubank's pulling power will be much appreciated by the promoter as he attempts to fill the 22,000-seat Nynex Arena and stir interest in Six pay-per-view sales.

Like an old music hall comedian making a guest appearance in a turgid sitcom, Eubank showed he had lost

none of his flair for showmanship as he strutted into a press conference to announce the contest.

Immaculately attired in a three-piece suit and riding boots, and twirling a bamboo walking stick that he claimed is 300 years old, he said: "I'll be fighting for the next 60 years; I love the publicity."

The 31-year-old former world middleweight and super-middleweight champion, now contemplating a 23rd world title fight, cheerfully launched into a lengthy explanation of his latest ventures: working to raise money for research into breast cancer and setting up a project to improve links between schools and businesses while enhancing students' computer literacy.

Thompson, a 34-year-old Mancunian who won the title on German soil in October by outpointing Ralf Roehrigian,

is of the I'll-do-my-talking-in-the-ring school and threatened to walk out unless Eubank stuck to boxing matters.

"I haven't come all this way to listen to him ramble on," Thompson said. "I live boxing, and if I beat him the world will take note."

Reverting to boxing, the sport he once described as "evil", Eubank said he had lost his last fight against Joe Calzaghe for the WBO super-middleweight title last October, because he had only two weeks to prepare.

"I underestimated him," he said. "But this time I will be away from my wife and family for six weeks and I will not let this one out of the bag."

Yates may go to High Court

KEVIN YATES is considering High Court action in an attempt to clear his name after being found guilty of biting the London Scottish flanker Simon Pen's ear.

Yates, who has been suspended for six months, last night rejected the chance of appealing through official Rugby Football Union channels as the 14-day Twickenham deadline approached.

The England prop was found guilty this month by an RFL disciplinary committee after the Fern incident, which occurred in a Telford's Bitter Cup fourth-round clash at the Recreation Ground on January 10.

"Kevin has asked for written reasons for the decision of the RFL disciplinary committee," Yates's solicitor Eddie Partridge said last night. "Such reasons have only just been received by fax and will now be considered. Mr Yates maintains his innocence in this matter."

The England forward Chris Sheehy has been transferred by Wasps back to Harlequins for a "nominal" fee.

Sheehy, 31, who has won seven England caps — the last of them as a substitute in the draw with New Zealand in December — moved in the other direction for the start of last

season and played in Wasps' league-winning team but this season he has not earned a regular first-team place.

Harlequins' rugby director Andy Keast said: "We welcome him back. He will be a valuable addition to our first-XV back-row resources."

Sheehy had 18 months of his contract left at Wasps but they deserve a return to Melville said: "We needed to do the deal before the March 1 transfer deadline. We have a clutch of younger back-row players coming through and they deserve as many matches as we can give them. It makes commercial and playing sense for us."



Sheehy... back to Quins

France stiffen backs by recalling Dourthe and promoting Aué

FRANCE yesterday recalled the utility back Richard Dourthe to their squad for the Five Nations Championship match against Ireland in Paris on March 7 and there is also a first call-up for the centre Jean-Marc Aué.

Dourthe, 23, who was dropped after the tour of Australia last June, replaces Xavier Garbajosa. Aué, 24, gains his selection after an impressive performance for France A against Scotland A on Friday. He is in for David Accagne, who was concussed in the 51-16 win over Scotland at Murrayfield on Saturday.

Bath's former England Under-18 captain, the centre Joe Ewens, yesterday joined the runaway Premiership Two leaders Bedford on loan.

The former England A full-back John Liley, recently made redundant by Moseley, has joined the League One leaders Worcester.

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The Guardian INTERACTIVE

Lewis pulls out of Euro championships, page 13
Saib signs for Tottenham, page 14

Tennis blooms in Battersea Park, page 15
Sheasby back in Harlequin colours, page 15

SportsGuardian

Anfield title hopes take another blow

Premiership: Liverpool 1, Everton 1

Ince rescues Liverpool

Ian Ross

LIVERPOOL may have finally surrendered any genuine hope they hold of stealing this season's Premiership title in the rarefied atmosphere of a most passionate Merseyside derby. It is now four years and eight games since they tasted victory against the old enemy from across Stanley Park. It is a fixture they have grown to distrust and dislike.

This was another good night for Manchester United, who now stand nine points clear of Liverpool with 11 league games remaining.

The night held much significance, both parochially and nationally, and Liverpool's Roy Evans must have winced after sifting through his weakened squad. A head count of those available revealed the horrible truth for a manager whose chances of extending his tenure beyond the summer had been reduced dramatically last week when Middlesbrough knocked them out in the semi-finals of the Coca-Cola Cup.

The players Evans might naturally have invited to stifle the aerial threat posed by Duncan Ferguson were Mark Wright, Phil Babb, Dominic Matteo and Neil Ruddock. All were absent, with the result that Liverpool's back-line looked young, pensive and rather small. In fairness they did well.

The good news for Evans was further forward, where Jamie Redknapp's subtlety was restored to midfield a mere three weeks after he underwent surgery on a knee. The Everton manager Howard Kendall, as he gets older, is more prone to replacing conservatism with a spirit of free enterprise and, mindful of his opposite number's defensive problems, he sent out a team laden with attacking promise.

For both clubs the stakes were high. Both needed to win and, pleasingly, both dispensed with the accepted derby reserve. In the frenetic opening exchanges, with the adrenal surge at its most pronounced, the game held all the composure of a schoolboy kick-about on a local park. Everton's attempt to seize the initiative proved embarrassingly futile. In fact, it was like the old days: Liverpool laid siege and their neighbours held on grimly.

But for the proficiency of Michael Owen the evening's competitive edge would have been surrendered early. Liverpool could have been two goals to the good inside seven minutes.

Twice the youngster was sent clear down the middle by



Too close to call... Danny Cadamarteri of Everton has the pace but Liverpool's Rob Jones has the touch at Anfield

PHOTOGRAPH: BEN RADFORD

beautifully threaded passes from Steve McManaman; twice he proved mortal, driving first wide and then into the legs of the goalkeeper Thomas Myhre.

Everton's response at a time when their thoughts embraced nothing more ambitious than survival was taken but spectacular. Mickael Madar is a player of many extravagant touches but his left-

foot volley from 30 yards was from such an acute angle as to be breathtaking. David James could not hold on but did well to stop it.

Thereafter, the tackles flew, the referee brandished his yellow card at regular intervals and the two defences tightened like drums. Even so, Everton almost drew first blood on the half-hour when Ferguson found himself at the

sharp end of an intricate move, only to see his low drive knocked away for a corner by James.

Everton, true to the pattern of recent derbies, began to feed off Liverpool's apparent sense of unease. The fluidity which had marked the home side's early football was gone, replaced by the insecurity which has so reduced their effectiveness this season.

They were there for the taking and Everton were happy to accept the invitation. Twelve minutes into a blur of a second half, blue eclipsed red as Ferguson drove in sweet and low from 15 yards after Madar had touched back Michael Ball's long throw-in.

Predictably the siege was relayed by Liverpool and it was met with swift reward. Seconds after Madar had

squandered a glorious opening in front of the Kop, Paul Ince turned the ball in at the other end after Dave Watson had only partially cleared an Owen cross from the right.

Liverpool 1-4-2: James; Jones, Kerr, Carragher, Ho; Ross, McManaman, Redknapp, Ince, Leighton, Fowler (Murray, 80min), Owen (Swales, 15-2-2), Myhre, Ward, Titer, Wilson, Bille, Ball; Ferrelly, Thomas, Cadamarteri (Owen, 40), Ferguson, Madar (McMan, 70). Referee: P. Jones (Loughborough).

Lottery looms over Lord's and ladies



Jim White

AS THE rest of the nation's cricket fans wrestle with the questions of the moment (such as the long-term health effects of overdoing on finger-nails) at Lord's the game's establishment is about to engage with an issue most of us assumed belonged to another century. At a special general meeting this afternoon, the membership of the MCC will decide whether to allow the election to their club of a previously banned group: women. Or, as they are known at Lord's, ladies.

All 18,000 MCC members — strictly male members, obviously — are being asked to vote on an issue which, when it was last raised in a plebiscite, gained only marginally more electoral support than the Reform Party. In 1991, more than 65 per cent of those voting were against the idea of sharing their Long Room with females. Well, other than the cleaners. But this time is different. This time, there is the small matter of the National Lottery.

The MCC, seeking both to expand the architectural gem of Lord's and to buy up Shenley Park cricket ground in Hertfordshire as an additional coaching and playing facility, is after Lottery funding. The Lottery board, however, chastened by rows over donations to elitist operations such as the Royal Opera House, could not be seen to look favourably on an organisation whose rules preclude half the population.

Hence the committee of the MCC has recommended that members, if they want to see their club expand, vote in favour of universal suffrage. But, since the motion requires a two-thirds majority to be passed, it will take an electoral turnaround of May 1 proportions to effect change.

And for many members, heads wedged firmly in the sand, a positive vote would represent suicidal acquiescence. As one MCC stalwart succinctly put it: "We don't want Germaine Greer and her pals tramping through our pavilion just to please the bloody Lottery."

It is a quaint assumption among the more conservative members at Lord's (now there's an intriguing thought) that never mind the Grace Gates, the floodgates are about

to be opened to a frightful battalion of Greenham Common veterans camped in anticipation along St John's Wood Road. Perhaps Messrs Bufton and Tufton would be reassured if the next time they lifted their eyes up from their navel and glanced around the glorious acres of Lord's into those areas where public access is open to all sexes. Then they will spot how few women currently take the opportunity to go and watch cricket.

Also, and this may come as a shock to the members, though Greer may have many ambitions in life, she does not, among them, number spending her summers ossefying in the Lord's pavilion. Which is a shame, since she would live the place up, providing a level of conversation on a different planet from that overheard the last time I watched cricket there. On that occasion the talk largely involved the potential savings associated with switching from a petrol to a diesel-engined Rover 440.

But what is really hardening the resolve of the Taliban wing of the MCC membership is the possibility being discussed openly by revolutionary elements on the committee that a fast track might be developed to allow some ladies to circumnavigate an institution almost as venerable as the club itself: the waiting list. At present standing at 18 years, it is a badge of commitment for those who have served time in its legendary length. Allowing John Major to jump the queue because he was prime minister was bad enough, but letting an individual leap-frog precedent simply because they've got bumps on their chest is not on.

SUCH is the head of steam being developed over the issue that this afternoon's vote is about as easy to call as the result of the next Test. If England lose that one, though, the consequence will be little more than a tabloid inquisition. If this vote goes the wrong way, however, cricket as a whole will suffer, as it finds its ruling body is unable to inject its snout into the trough of Lottery funding, promised for 200 years of petty prejudice.

Meanwhile, in an indication of the distance between the ordinary cricket fan and the ruling elite, when a couple of members of the Barmy Army, plinking up on the boundaries of Caribbean cricket grounds, were asked their opinion about women, cricket and the MCC, their thoughts turned to that streaker who ran across the outfield at Port of Spain. They were anxious lest her performance had stripped her of the right to join.

Vickery appeals against punch ban



Propped up... Phil Vickery is backed by club and country

Robert Armstrong reports on England's attempt to overturn the citation procedure

THE England prop Phil Vickery has lodged an appeal with the International Board against the 30-day ban he received for punching Colin Charvis during Saturday's 60-26 victory over Wales at Twickenham.

Vickery's appeal, which is supported by Roy Manock, the Rugby Football Union's disciplinary officer, and Clive Woodward, the England coach, must be dealt with by the board within seven days. The appeal will challenge the fairness of the citing rule, which requires that a player found guilty at a disciplinary hearing must be dealt with in the same way as if the referee had seen the offence and sent him off.

Vickery's minimum 30-day suspension means he would miss England's match against Scotland at Murrayfield on March 22.

Peter Boyle, the match com-

missioner, was compelled under the rules to treat Vickery as if he had in fact been sent off for punching. However, if the referee Colin Hawke had seen the Gloucester forward punching Charvis, he would probably have done no more than show him the yellow card, a penalty that becomes null and void at the end of the match.

"Discipline among the England players is vital," said Woodward. "Nevertheless, it is essential that this unbalanced regulation is changed. I will give my full support to Roy Manock and the efforts of the RFU to get it reviewed. This regulation is counter-productive for the players and the sport."

Manock said: "The fact that the player appealed against the punishment highlights the anomaly of a regulation which is affecting the game. I wrote to the International

Board on this subject in December and I'm looking forward to their response.

"As the referee did not see this incident and the citation was proved by the match commissioner, the player receives a ban of 30 days which affects his career, his club and the country he represents.

"It's a regulation which must be reviewed as soon as possible by the IB to ensure that these inconsistencies do not re-occur."

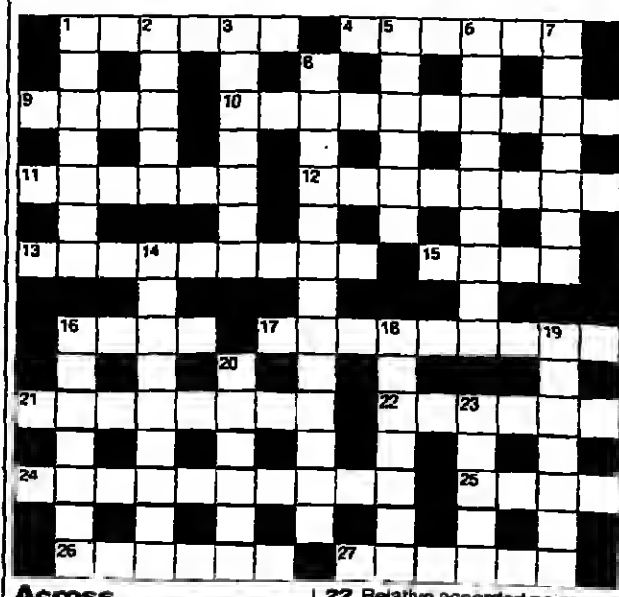
If Vickery's appeal is unsuccessful, his next chance to play for England will be against Ireland at Twickenham on April 4. He would miss out on a £3,000 match fee for the Scotland game as well as potential club bonuses in Premiership games against Wasps and Saracens.

Gloucester made a statement of support for Vickery yesterday. "The appeal has been passed to the International Board," it said. "Gloucester fully support Phil Vickery in this matter."

Yates's court action, page 15

Guardian Crossword No 21,206

Set by Andreus

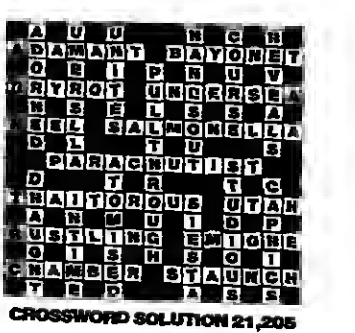


Across

- 1 When parking, sweetness is not to be trusted (6)
- 4 Clothes for the short man? I am short, that's the point (6)
- 9 Birds bring another bird back (4)
- 10 e.g. Wat Tyler writ large in Spanish oil (6)
- 11 Crosses the bar to get the attractive (8)
- 12 Changing into gear that's attractive (8)
- 13 Get garage to deliver the cement additive (9)
- 15 Detectives reversing in heavy goods vehicle (4)
- 16 Container for the wine (4)
- 17 Kitchen equipment from third school broken up or missing (4-5)
- 21 Make familiar charge mostly to the cat (8)

Down

- 22 Relative accorded points, that's a relief (6)
- 24 Including the note, price isn't bad — we have takers? (10)
- 26 Sun-god's hot spots (4)
- 28 Gets thrown out with those not acceptable being topless (6)
- 27 Quiet female follows Henry to become a joiner (6)
- 1 Employing Dad before taking a break (7)
- 2 On active service in Sodbury, heads for a place of refreshment (5)
- 3 Attention — advert for a muffer (7)
- 5 Leg you pull when giving praise? (6)
- 6 Beginning in summertime with the mountains (9)

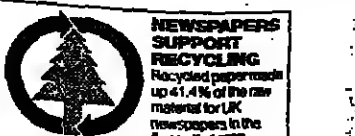


CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,206

- 7 Walk with the Marshal in London (7)
- 8 Internet meant to be amusing? (13)
- 14 Retiring with "Far from the Madding Crowd" (9)
- 16 Conceal direction to the Island (7)
- 18 Sharpen pan with integrity (7)
- 19 With the king in drink, the issue is disloyalty (7)
- 20 By being exact, almost cheat in a way (6)
- 23 Settle for the fish (5)

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G2 cover story

24/2/1998